

The

January-February 2005

No. 20

\$2 €2

Internationalist



Asian Tsunami Disaster

Special Issue

Capitalist Tidal Wave of Death

Pages 10-28



Tyler Hicks/New York Times

Tsunami refugees in Calang, Aceh, in northern Sumatra Island. Indonesian government is using disaster to tighten military control of rebellious province.

Rape of Falluja: U.S. War Crime 3

U.S.-Sponsored Coup d'État in Ukraine 33

Mexican Working Class Fights Back. . 40

Drive Brazilian Troops Out of Haiti! . . . 54

Australia \$4, Brazil R\$3, Britain £1.50, Canada \$3, Europe €2, India Rs. 25, Japan ¥250, Mexico \$10, Philippines 20 pesos, South Africa R10, South Korea 2,000 won

In this issue...

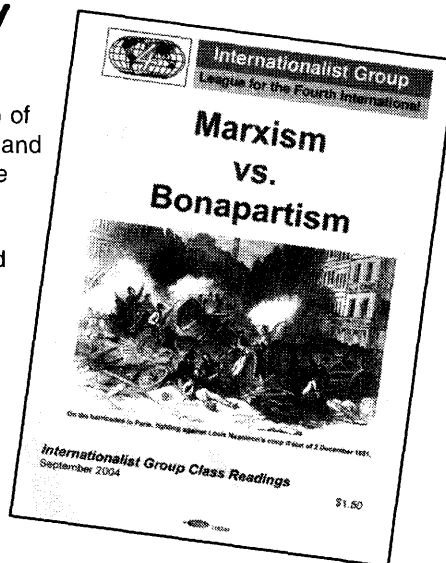
The Rape of Falluja: U.S. War Crime	3
Boycott Colonial Occupation "Election" in Iraq	4
Imperial Coronation in D.C.	8
Asian Tsunami Disaster	
Capitalist Tidal Wave of Death	10
Lisbon Earthquake, 1755: From the Enlightenment to the French Revolution ..	12
A "Natural Disaster" Foretold	14
Indonesian Military Butchers Out of Aceh!	16
Don't Beg for Charity, Fight for Workers Revolution	21
Marxism vs. Islamic Fundamentalism	24
Beware of Not-so-Non-Governmental Organizations	24
Mexico, 1985: From the Earthquake to the Popular Front	26
Rosa Luxemburg, Martinique	28
Attention Wal-Mart Workers: Union Victory in Quebec	29
U.S.-Sponsored Coup d'État in Ukraine	33
The Mexican Working Class Is Fighting Back	40
Brazil: We Don't Need a New Social-Demo- cratic Party of Disillusioned <i>Lulistas</i>	49
Drive Brazilian Troops Out of Haiti!	54
"Million-Worker March": Back-Door Support for Capitalist Democrats	56
Revolution pages	58-64
"Fatherland Security" Hits CUNY	58
NYC City Council Hearings: Police Repression at CUNY	62
Drive Military/Cop Recruiters Off Campus ..	63
Subscription blank graphic based on a poster by V.A. Rodchenko, <i>Books</i> (1925).	

Order Now!

With the intensification of repressive legislation and increasing police-state measures, an examination of the Marxist analysis of and policy toward bonapartism is vital. Readings include articles by Marx and Trotsky, as well as selections from the present-day Trotskyist press.

US\$1.50

Order from/make checks payable to: Mundial Publications, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, New York 10008, U.S.A.



Visit the League for the Fourth International/ Internationalist Group on the Internet

<http://www.internationalist.org>

Now available on our site:

- Founding Statement of the Internationalist Group
- Declaration of the League for the Fourth International
- Articles from *The Internationalist*
- Articles from *Vanguarda Operária*
- Articles from *El Internacionalista*
- Articles and documents in German, French and Russian
- The fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal
- Marxist readings



Visita la página del Grupo Internacionalista en Internet

Visite a página da Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

- Matérias de *Vanguarda Operária* • A luta para libertar Mumia Abu-Jamal
- Documentos marxistas sobre a luta pela libertação do negro e da mulher

The Internationalist

A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism
for the Reforging of the Fourth International

Publication of the Internationalist Group,
section of the League for the Fourth International

EDITORIAL BOARD: Jan Norden (editor), Mark Lazarus, Abram Negrete, Marjorie Salzburg, Socorro Valero.

The Internationalist (ISSN 1091-2843) is published bimonthly, skipping July-August, by Mundial Publications, P.O. Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A. Telephone: (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711 E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com Subscriptions: US\$10 for five issues.

No. 20

* 0000 C-701

January-February 2005



Bipartisan Massacre: Aftermath of War Elections

The Rape of Falluja: U.S. War Crime

Patrick Baz/Agence France-Presse



Marines ride down main street in Falluja on November 14, after a week of bombardment and wholesale destruction of the city by U.S. troops.

DECEMBER 4—After the American “terror war elections” came the post-election U.S. terror attack in Iraq. George Bush figured he would celebrate his reelection with a bang: send the Marines into the Iraqi rebel stronghold of Falluja and flush out the varmints. That would show the world that he means business. At mid-day on Wednesday, November 3, Democrat John Kerry conceded the election in a phone call to the White House. By Saturday, November 6, the assault on Falluja began. U.S. rockets took out their first target: the Hai Nazal Hospital, a new facility that was just about ready to open its doors. A spokesman for the First Marines Expeditionary Force said, “A hospital was not on the target list.” But there it is, reduced to a pile of rubble. Then on Sunday night the Special Forces stormed the Falluja General Hospital. They rounded up all the doctors, pushed them face down on the floor and handcuffed them with plastic straps behind their backs. With the hospital occupied, those wounded by the U.S. aerial bombings headed to the Falluja Central Health Clinic. And so at 5:30 a.m. on Tuesday, November 9, U.S. warplanes bombed that clinic as well, killing 35 patients, 15 medics, 4 nurses, 5 support staff and 4 doctors, according to a doctor who survived (*The Nation*, 13 December). U.S. fire also targeted an ambulance, killing five patients and the driver.

“The hospital was selected as an early target because the American military believed that it was the source of rumors about heavy casualties,” when the U.S. attacked Falluja in April, wrote the *New York Times* (8 November). “It’s a center of propaganda,” a senior American officer said. Rumors? Propaganda? Iraq Body Count, whose tallies of Iraqi dead since the invasion have been extremely conservative, has done a detailed analysis of all available figures, concluding that out of 800-plus persons killed during the U.S.’ April attack (336 buried in Falluja’s soccer stadium), some 600 were civilians, half of them women and children.¹ A hospital is a place where civilian casualties could receive treatment. But according to the U.S. military spokesmen, there were “no civilian casualties,” so no hospital was needed. Likewise, a hospital is a place where injured Iraqi insurgents might be treated. But the objective of the assault on Falluja was to kill the insurgents, every last one, so again, no hospital was needed. The Fourth Geneva Convention on Warfare declares in no uncertain terms, “Civilian hospitals organized to give care to the wounded and sick, the infirm and maternity cases, may in no circumstances be the object of attack but shall at all times be respected and pro-

¹ See Iraq Body Count, “No Longer Unknowable: Falluja’s April Civilian Toll is 600” (26 October 2004) <http://www.iraqbodycount.net/>

Boycott Colonial Occupation Election in Iraq!

Battered by a raging insurgency that has engulfed central and northern Iraq, the U.S. imperialists are hoping that a bogus "election" on January 30 can offer them a respite. This is not in any sense a "democratic" vote, even seen through the perverted prism of bourgeois electoralism in which capitalist money men cast the decisive votes. ***This rigged ballot is an attempt by the American butchers of Falluja and torturers of Abu Ghraib to legitimate their bloody occupation and destruction of Iraq.***

The Iraqi pseudo-election is a counterinsurgency tactic that the U.S. military has repeatedly used, from the Philippines in the 1950s to Vietnam in the '60s, the Dominican Republic following the U.S. invasion in 1965, and El Salvador in the 1980s, where it installed a government of the death squads. ***The January 30 farce should be actively boycotted by all opponents of colonial rule, in an effort to smash this "electoral" façade for U.S. terrorist rule.***

The Bush regime has pushed hard for this "election." Saner minds in Washington and in Baghdad's "Green Zone" where occupation authorities are holed up worry that

it could backfire. They fear it could exacerbate tensions between Sunni Muslims and Shiite leaders thirsty for power after more than a century under the boot of the Ottomans, the British, an imposed monarchy, and the brutal Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein – installed with U.S. aid in order to slaughter Iraqi communists.

No "election" under U.S. occupation can be anything but a fraud. All the parties and candidates in the January 30 masquerade (including the phony Communists) are puppets of the imperialists. Any "transitional government" which comes out of this hoax will be a front for the Pentagon just as the "Coalition Provisional Authority" and the "Iraqi Governing Council" that preceded it. If a sectarian/communal civil war results, it will be the direct result of American policies.

What's needed instead is a united uprising of Iraqi toilers to drive out the U.S./UK imperialists and their stooges. For workers revolution to sweep away all the theocratic, monarchical and military potentates of the Near East, along with the Zionist butchers who are a deadly menace to Arab and Hebrew working people!

tected by the Parties to the conflict." That was written in 1949, after World War II. The Geneva Conventions also outlaw practices like torture of prisoners. But according to the White House legal counsel, Alberto Gonzales, now promoted to Attorney General of the United States, the strictures of the Geneva Convention are outdated and "quaint."

So doubtless after careful study by the Center for Army Lessons Learned at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, the Pentagon's first rule in its terrorist "war on terror" is now: *hit the hospitals first*. There are to be no statistics about women and children killed, no pictures of maimed bodies, no medical care for the insurgent or civilian wounded. The "born again" Christian George W. Bush goes by the mercenary motto, "Kill 'em all and let god sort 'em out." But it isn't just Republican Bush. In the 1999 war on Yugoslavia, by Democrat Bill Clinton, the U.S. deliberately bombed the Belgrade maternity hospital, all the while cynically claiming that no hospital was on the target list. (They also targeted the Chinese embassy, to teach Beijing a lesson, lamely claiming they got the address mixed up with a military warehouse.) In short, the political and military commanders of the United States are rabid mass murderers and torturers, and conscious war criminals to boot. U.S. imperialism with its mad dog leadership is, *by far*, the greatest threat to humanity today. The colonial occupation of Iraq (and Afghanistan) must be defeated, and the imperialist system smashed through world socialist revolution.

Moreover, the attack on Falluja was a *bipartisan massacre*, which had the support of both major parties of American capitalism. During the first debate (September 30) of the recent U.S. presidential election campaign, Democratic candidate John Kerry accused Bush of backing down from the assault on Falluja last April. At that time there was a worldwide outcry over the slaughter of innocent civilians that forced the Pentagon to back off. But Kerry argued that the Bush people "don't think these things

through properly," and "you have to do that by beginning to not back off of Falluja and other places." Neither the Democratic candidate nor any of the other liberal mouthpieces said a word against the recent criminal assault on Falluja, which they fully supported. The conservative *Wall Street Journal* (17 November) hailed the "Victory at Fallujah" while the liberal *New York Times* (22 November) wrote of the "swift and stunning American military sweep through Falluja," but worried about the "Costly Troop Deficit in Iraq." As Kerry did in the presidential campaign, the *Times* (8 November) called for sending in *more* U.S. soldiers, some 40,000 more, to keep the Iraqis down. On December 1, the Pentagon announced it was increasing U.S. forces in Iraq by 12,000 by keeping troops there longer.

The martyrdom of Falluja began immediately following the U.S. invasion in April 2003, when occupation forces fired on a protest demonstration, killing 18 (see "Defeat Colonial Occupation of Iraq!" *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003). The assault a year later was a U.S. revenge attack over the killing of four mercenaries (referred to in the press as "contractors," as if they were house builders rather than professional killers) from the Blackwater Security rent-a-merc company, whose bodies were mutilated and strung up from the railroad bridge. The April 2004 assault was already a U.S. war crime, reminiscent of Nazi "collective punishment" of the Czech town of Lidice where *Reichsprotektor* and deputy Gestapo chief Reinhard Heydrich was killed by partisans in 1942. But that pales in comparison to the celebration of Bush's reelection by gutting an entire city of more than 250,000 inhabitants. According to Washington, Falluja had to be "pacified" and "secured" so that it could participate in the Iraqi "election" scheduled by occupation authorities for January. To believe that lie one would have to be clinically insane, but that didn't stop the imperialist media from solemnly repeating this story that none of them believe. The fact is there will be no vote in



Doctors at Falluja General Hospital were handcuffed and pushed to the floor when U.S. troops seized the facility, November 8.

Falluja in January: insurgents continue to ambush the U.S. occupiers, civilians won't even be allowed to return to their destroyed homes for weeks. It will take years to rebuild the devastated city.

More than 25,000 U.S. troops were pulled in to surround Falluja, 15,000 of them ready to storm the rebel citadel. Plus another couple thousand soldiers and police of the puppet Iraqi pseudo-government of "prime minister" Iyad Allawi, half of whom walked out before the fighting began. Interestingly, as he was giving a pep talk to 2,500 troops lined up before going in for the kill, Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, the top enlisted Marine in Iraq, compared the coming battle to the bloody U.S. assault on the Vietnamese city of Hue in March 1968, trying to take back the ancient Vietnamese capital from the Viet Cong (the Vietnamese Communists), who had seized it during the Têt offensive. "You're all in the process of making history," Kent told them. "This is another Hue city in the making. I have no doubt ... that each and every one of you is going to do what you have always done – kick some butt." He neglected to mention that although the U.S. managed to "take back" Hue, the Têt offensive was a turning point in Vietnam as it became evident even to sections of the American ruling class that they couldn't win that dirty imperialist war. Now various people in the Bush administration are talking about Falluja as the "tipping point" in the Iraq war. But it isn't tipping in their favor. Falluja was, as the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* (22 November) titled its story, "A Catastrophic Victory," echoing Bush's description of the 2003 U.S. invasion as a "catastrophic success."

It took the U.S. troops about 8 days to go down three main streets in Falluja from north to south, advancing about a quarter mile a day. The Iraqi defenders put up what the Marine division commander termed a "a very stiff and determined resistance" (*Christian Science Monitor*, 26 November) against overwhelming firepower and technology. Snipers kept emerging from the rubble to take out U.S. troops. Insurgents dressed in Iraqi army uniforms set up ambushes where they shot the

attackers. The Pentagon has admitted to 51 U.S. soldiers killed in Falluja proper, and 425 wounded, which seriously understates U.S. losses. The *Wall Street Journal* reported over 100 U.S. soldiers dead and 900 seriously wounded in the ten days following the start of the assault on Falluja, including those killed and injured in the upsurge of fighting in Mosul, Ramadi, Samara, Taji and other cities in central and northern Iraq. A *New York Times* reporter who was "embedded" with one Marine company wrote that it took 36 casualties during the fighting, 25 percent of the company's strength; a *Christian Science Monitor* reporter says his unit sustained losses of 20 percent. A standard calculation for battlefield commanders is that with a 10 percent casualty rate, a unit may be "neutralized," no longer capable of fighting (U.S. Army, *FM 17-18*, Light Ar-

mor Operations). So the battle for Falluja took quite a toll on the attackers, whatever the Pentagon brass may pretend.

In spite of all this, fighting is still going on in Falluja, as guerrilla squads pop up behind the U.S. troops in the neighborhoods that have supposedly been "cleared" of insurgents. Meanwhile, throughout the areas of Iraq populated by Sunni Arabs – the central region including Baghdad and the key oil producing area of the north – insurgents have launched an offensive against the colonial occupiers and their puppet soldiers and police. In the city of Mosul, while the fighting was at its height in Falluja, rebels took over nine police stations and held the center of the city for several days, killing scores of cops and troops of the quisling regime. The Iraqi police melted away: only 800 out of 4,000 stayed at their posts. So much for "Iraqization" of the war – U.S. troops are going to have to occupy the cities as long as the occupation lasts, making them constant targets in a war in which there are no fronts and no safe rear areas. Mortar attacks regularly hit the cordoned-off Green Zone in the capital where the U.S. expeditionary force and its Iraqi "government" have their HQ. The highway to the Baghdad airport is one of the deadliest stretches of road in the country. Already, U.S. troops have mutinied over being sent on a "suicide mission," as a fuel platoon from the 343rd Quartermaster Company did in mid-October, for which 17 soldiers were arrested and may be court-martialed.

What about the Iraqi insurgents and civilians killed in Falluja? At the outset of the attack on Iraq in March 2003, U.S. commander Tommy Franks declared, "We don't do body counts." His reluctance was a legacy of the Vietnam War when the body counts of "VC dead" that were daily announced by General Westmoreland, as he came to be known, were notorious for their lies. Body counts or no, during the fighting in Falluja local commanders claimed that they had killed 3,000 insurgents, later reduced to 1,200. Reporters questioned the figure. But were they rebel fighters? The *New York Times* (15 November) commented: "The absence of insurgent bodies in Falluja has remained an

enduring mystery." So whose bodies were lying in the streets for days, "half-eaten by dogs"? Lt. Gen. John F. Sattler, commander of the First Marine Expeditionary Force, "said that he did not know of any civilian deaths," according to the *Times* (20 November). Yet the International Committee of the Red Cross reported that some 800 of those dead were civilians—i.e., the overwhelming majority—many of them buried alive when their homes were shelled by artillery or destroyed by the 500 and 2,000 lb. bombs that the Air Force has been dropping on neighborhoods day and night. The few pictures that have been released show a scene of utter devastation, an entire city laid waste. Over half the 100-plus mosques in Falluja were severely damaged or destroyed.

As the photos of hideous torture at Abu Ghraib prison became the symbol of the imperialists' obscene torture of Iraq, the storming of Falluja was summed up in the video of a U.S. soldier murdering an unarmed and wounded Iraqi prisoner in a mosque. A righteous rage at the cold-blooded executioners swept Iraq and the Near East as the scene was played at length on TV, over and over (only a snippet was shown in the U.S., blacking out the shots of the bullet hitting the prisoner's head and blood splattering as "too gruesome"). Defenders of the imperialist war and colonial occupation cynically argued that perhaps the soldier was afraid for his life, who knows, and besides the Iraqi prisoners were "people without morals." The cameraman who filmed it said the prisoner made no threatening moves, and it is likely that four other wounded prisoners in the mosque were killed at the same time. He recounts that as the Marines emerged, a lieutenant asked "did you shoot them," to which a soldier replied, "Roger that, sir." Asked if the prisoners were armed, the Marine shrugged. The inescapable conclusion is that the soldiers were obeying orders or following standard operating procedure in shooting the prisoners. A journalist who had accompanied a Marine unit during the 2003 invasion immediately recognized the practice:

Falluja Massacre, April 2004



Scenes from the murderous U.S. assault on Falluja in April. Flag on U.S. vehicle sums up "Kill 'em all" mentality of troops, Marine commanders assert hospitals were source of propaganda about high casualties, so they had to occupy hospitals first. But investigation by Iraq Body Count showed that some 600 out of 800 deaths due to the attack on Falluja were civilians. Photos (censored from U.S. media) showed numerous wounded children and babies killed by bombing.



"Marines call executing wounded combatants 'dead-checking.' 'They teach us to do dead-checking when we're clearing rooms,' an enlisted Marine recently returned from Iraq told me. 'You put two bullets into the guy's chest and one in the brain. But when you enter a room where guys are wounded you might not know if they're alive or dead. So they teach us to dead-check them by pressing them in

the eye with your boot, because generally a person, even if he's faking being dead, will flinch if you poke him there. If he moves, you put a bullet in the brain...".
 –“Dead Check in Falluja,” *Village Voice*, 24 November

The rape of Falluja was a heinous criminal act, a war crime worthy of the Nazis. In addition to the Czech town of Lidice, it recalls the martyrdom of Guernika in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War, a massacre immortalized in Picasso's painting of a cry of anguish, where the Basque town was pounded into rubble by 100,000 pounds of bombs while German Messerschmitt dive bombers strafed those trying to flee the carnage. ***The obliteration of Falluja was a war crime worthy of Zionist Israel,*** which bombed the Palestinian refugee camp at Jenin into oblivion after an Israeli tank was taken out by *intifada* fighters. The Zionist army continues to carry out Nazi-style “collective punishment” in the West Bank and Gaza, killing hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including shooting school girls in uniform point-blank. Much of the Pentagon's “strategy” and tactics in Iraq are in fact borrowed from the Israelis, including blasting in every house entered, allegedly to avoid booby-trapped doors. ***But more to the point, the destruction of Falluja was a hideous war crime worthy of U.S. imperialism.***

The destruction of Falluja inevitably calls to mind the words attributed to a U.S. officer in Vietnam at the time of the Têt offensive: “we had to destroy the village in order to save it.” That certainly is the mentality of the U.S. military in Iraq today. In Vietnam, the United States killed upwards of 3 million Vietnamese during eight years of war. In the Korean War, the U.S. slaughtered more than 2 million Koreans. In World War II, the U.S. notoriously slaughtered more than 200,000 Japanese with the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. This came after the deliberate firebombing of Tokyo in March 1945, in which the U.S. murdered more than 100,000 people. Or the U.S./British firebombing of Dresden, Germany in February 1945 (150,000 to 225,000 dead, almost all civilians and wounded soldiers), part of the Allied imperialists' systematic campaign of terror bombing German cities in the latter part of World War II which killed an estimated 635,000 German civilians. (See “The Great Chemical Weapons Hoax” and “U.S./British Massacre at Dresden” in *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003.) Not to mention the countless bloody crimes of Yankee imperialism in Latin America: Bay of Pigs invasion, Pinochet coup in Chile, contra terror war on Nicaragua, death squads in El Salvador, the rape of Grenada, the invasion of Panama, etc.

Already in Iraq, a study by the Center for International Emergency Disaster and Refugee Studies of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, published in the British journal of international medicine, *The Lancet* (29 October), has concluded that “about 100,000 excess deaths, or more have happened since the 2003 invasion of Iraq.” This is in addition to the estimated 1.5 million Iraqis who died as a result of the draconian United Nations “sanctions” following the 1990-91 Gulf War, including a million children who died of malnutrition and preventable diseases, far more than the estimated 130,000

Kurds, Shiites and communists killed by the murderous former U.S. henchman, Saddam Hussein. After the worldwide outcry earlier this year over U.S. torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, the imperialists try to justify the slaughter at Falluja by pointing to the grisly beheadings of hostages by Islamic fundamentalist groups. Beyond the fact that many, if not most, of the hostages work in one way or another for the colonial occupation regime, and that the upsurge of Islamicist outfits (both Sunni and Shiite) is a direct response to the imperialist war of conquest of Iraq, one can safely say that far more Iraqis have been beheaded by the imperialist barbarians with their high tech weaponry than by the medievalist Sunni zealots with their swords. Accounts of the carnage in Falluja mention quite a number of civilian dead with their heads and limbs blown off by U.S. bombs, but photos of that are never shown.

One could endlessly recount the endless atrocities committed by the U.S. in Iraq, which have been systematically suppressed by the “free but responsible” bourgeois media. What's key is to draw the political lessons, beginning with the fact that ***this is not just “Bush's war,”*** as so many of the opportunists and pseudo-socialists say, ***it is a war of U.S. imperialism.*** They want to blame it all on the Republicans in order to sidle up to the antiwar Democrats. But with his “we can do better” rhetoric, Kerry was promising to continue the war. Nader, for his part, didn't even call for immediate withdrawal of U.S.

continued on page 47

League for the Fourth International

Internationalist Group/U.S.

Internationalist Group, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.

Tel. (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711

E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

Boston: write to P.O. Box 1044, Boston, MA 02117

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

Brazil: write to Caixa Postal 084027, CEP 27251-740, Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil

Rio de Janeiro: write to Caixa Postal 3982, CEP 20001-974, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

E-mail: lqb1996@yahoo.com.br

Groupe Internationaliste

In France: write to MBE n° 244, 80, rue Legendre, 75017 Paris, France

LIV/Deutschland

Germany: write to Postfach 74 06 41, 22096 Hamburg, Germany

Grupo Internacionalista/México

Mexico: write to Apdo. Postal 70-379, Admón. de Correos No. 70, CP 04511, México, D.F., Mexico

E-mail: grupointernacionalista@yahoo.com.mx

Bring Down Bush With Hard Class Struggle!

Imperial Coronation in D.C.



Nuremburg Rally on the Potomac? More like Louis Napoleon at Versailles. *Remember the Paris Commune!*

At noon on January 20, George W. Bush had himself sworn in for a second term as commander of U.S. imperialism, a/k/a president of the United States. The elaborate ceremony resembled a coronation more than a ritual of “democracy,” European observers complained. The embedded bourgeois media gushed over the pomp and circumstance. But rather than some anemic Old World “constitutional” monarch, this was a “robust” display of imperial might by rulers who fancy themselves a new Roman Empire. Of course, we all recall what happened to the last one, and the current American empire is bogged down in its bloody occupation of Iraq. Bush carefully avoided mentioning that in his inaugural address.

The White House gang imagine themselves to be the unchallenged rulers of the world, and together with Wall Street, masters of the universe. What they put on in Washington, a capital city laid out on imperial lines, was an ostentatious celebration of militarism. From the huge motorcycle cavalcade and the many thousands of cops in the streets, some brought in from Pennsylvania and Chicago, to the warplanes roaring across the skies overhead, the intent was to “shock and awe” – i.e., intimidate – the population. Streets were closed, manhole covers welded shut and access restricted to more than 100 blocks. Police checkpoints were everywhere. The ten thou-

sand or so demonstrators who came to protest the obscene spectacle were tightly penned in; police pepper-sprayed some on general principles. Protesters chanted, “This is what a police state looks like.” Not quite yet, but it’s getting there.

It was an obscene celebration of money, of the unshackled domination of capital. With a total cost of over \$40 million, well-heeled donors and corporate moguls could “pay to play,” at \$25,000 to \$250,000 a pop, and buy their seat at the table of power. At the Capitol, a spectacle with oversized flags and hundreds of party bigwigs, military brass and top officials lining the ramparts had a hint of Hitler’s Nuremburg rallies. But it was more like an assemblage of notables from the Versailles court of Louis Napoleon – Bonaparte’s not-so-bright nephew, the one who seized power in 1852 after tiring of parliament, invaded Mexico in the late 1850s, got bogged down there and had to exit in disgrace, then lost a war with Germany in 1870, whereupon Parisian workers took power and established the Commune.

Bush gave a bombastic speech to the crowd at the Capitol, long on the rhetoric about “freedom” (mentioned 27 times in 21 minutes), by which he means “free markets” and “free trade.” Written by the president’s born-again Christian flack, the harangue was filled with evangelical imagery: vintage anti-Communism, a slap at Clintonesque indulgence, and images of

apocalypse: "After the shipwreck of communism came years of relative quiet, years of repose, years of sabbatical. And then there came a day of fire," namely 11 September 2001. The fiery imagery is key for a Christian fundamentalist president who thanks the evangelical vote for his reelection, who has repeatedly said that god chose him to lead the U.S. at this time, and who believes in Armageddon (the final battle to be fought as Israel retakes its "biblical lands," stretching up to the Euphrates River in Iraq) and Rapture (in which the elect will rise to heaven).

Meanwhile, there is something approaching apocalypse now on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates. While champagne flowed in Washington, rivers of blood are flowing in Iraq. Anti-Bush demonstrators in Washington chanted about American soldiers dying in Iraq. Yet the 1,300-plus deaths among the U.S. expeditionary force (and several hundred more among its privatized auxiliaries) pale in comparison to the tens of thousands of Iraqis who have been slaughtered in Washington's wars of imperialist aggression, and the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children who died of preventable disease due to the U.S.' deliberate destruction of the country's infrastructure in the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War and the murderous United Nations "sanctions" enforced and praised by Bill Clinton's Democrats.

U.S. officials act as if they are in cloud cuckoo land, talking of "democratic elections" in Iraq when half the country is up in arms in revolt. Reporters in Iraq are too worried for their safety to leave their hotel rooms, while international election monitors will "observe" the Iraqi elections from Amman, Jordan. For the exploited and oppressed around the world, the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan were nothing short of a heinous *crime*. Yet even as a majority of the U.S. population concluded that the Iraq invasion was a costly "mistake," John Kerry and the Democrats were too timorous to even oppose it after the fact, only claiming that they could "do better." The fact is, the capitalist rivals were *both* war mongers, and the most resolute butcher won. Big surprise.

On the domestic front, the Bush gang is pushing the myth of an "ownership society," by which they mean gutting Social Security to divert several *trillion* dollars into "private accounts," which will actually be run by Wall Street money managers. This won't do a thing to "rescue" Social Security (which is hardly adequate as retirement income, but is also hardly in a "crisis" – it can pay full benefits up to 2042, even without raising taxes). But it will provide a huge injection of liquidity into stock markets that have been in the doldrums since the bursting of the dot.com bubble in 2000. Meanwhile, with a record annual trade deficit heading toward \$700 billion and another \$500 billion federal government deficit, the United States is courting a full-fledged capitalist crash if the Japanese and Chinese governments who have been buying up U.S. Treasury bonds ever decide to cash in or go over to the euro. Washington's only defense is to brandish the old U.S.-Soviet nuclear deterrence formula, "mutually assured destruction" (MAD): the threat is that if Wall Street tanks, so will your markets. Yet investors are fleeing the dollar in droves.

The Democrats' reaction to the November elections can be summed up as "Be afraid. Be very afraid." On Inauguration Day, several Congressmen were sighted in Canada (pure happenstance, the media reported). Antiwar demonstrators braved frigid cold to

show their disgust, and even in the rest of the not very numerous crowds quite a few anti-Bush signs could be seen. But bigger or smaller "peace" protests won't stop a regime hell-bent on dominating the world any more than the mealy mouthed Democrats can stop the Republican electoral machine. Minor bourgeois parties and politicians like the Greens and the maverick Ralph Nader (who ran most places on the ballot line of the right-wing populist Reform Party, whose last presidential candidate was the fascistic Pat Buchanan) only served to soak up popular discontent like a Bounty paper towel, to be thrown away in the black hole of electronic voting machines which leave no paper trail (and thus can't be subject to a Florida-style recount).

Lesson: *You can't fight Bush with Democrats* – or any bourgeois "alternative," for at bottom they all support U.S. imperialism. (That's why not even Nader and the Greens called for immediate U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.) But that does not mean that Bush is home free. Far from it. It only means that to bring down these bloodsuckers, it will take a real battle led by the only forces with the power to take on and defeat the predatory capitalist-imperialist system of which Bush & Co. are currently the spearhead. That force is the proletariat, the many millions-strong international working class, from Iraq to the United States. But to accomplish this mission, working people need a leadership that is up to the task, a revolutionary leadership that won't buckle when the class enemy plays hardball. They need a leadership like the Bolsheviks, who under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky made the October Revolution in Russia that for over 70 years haunted the imperialists, and whose spectre (judging from Bush's speech) still obsesses the bourgeoisie. They may declare communism dead and gone, but their draconian repression against even mild antiwar or anti-Bush protests at home shows they don't act on that delusion.

The liberal media are full of hopeful comments that perhaps Bush will be brought to task by his hubris. After all, look at Nixon, brought down by the Watergate scandal. Signs at the Washington protests called to "Impeach Bush." But the Democrats wouldn't impeach a wet noodle. More fundamentally, Nixon's forced departure wasn't because he burgled Democratic Party offices in D.C., but because he was losing the imperialist war in Vietnam. The helicopter whisking Nixon away from the White House lawn in August 1974 foreshadowed the helicopter taking off from the roof of the U.S. embassy in Saigon eight months later. On the home front, not even two years after Republican Nixon won in a landslide in 1972 (61 percent to 37 percent for Democrat McGovern, compared to 51 percent for Bush to 48 percent for Kerry in 2004), he faced mushrooming labor unrest.

After Bush's address, the talking heads on TV were busily trying to scope out what country he intends to invade next. The consensus was: Iran. But the Pentagon doesn't even have enough forces to police Iraq, much less invade Iran (with a population of 68 million, three times that of Iraq). In testimony at her Senate confirmation hearings, secretary of state designate Condoleezza Rice made barely veiled threats against Venezuela. North Korea is in Washington's gun sights, and as always Cuba is also high on the Bush regime's hit list.

continued on page 47

Asian Tsunami Disaster Was Man-Made

Capitalist

Tidal Wave of Death

At about 8 a.m. local time on December 26, a massive undersea earthquake occurred in the Indian Ocean to the west of northern Sumatra, Indonesia. Registering 9.0 on the Richter scale, it was the fourth largest earthquake worldwide since 1900, releasing the energy equivalent of 23,000 Hiroshima atomic bombs. This set off giant waves (*tsunamis* in Japanese¹), which raced across the Indian Ocean at speeds of up to 500 miles an hour, striking Thailand in 30 minutes, sending 30-foot-high waves crashing into Sri Lanka an hour and a half later and hitting Somalia on the east coast of Africa, some 2,800 miles

away, more than ten hours after the quake. Whole villages were swept out to sea in some places. The tsunami is now estimated to have caused at least 225,000 deaths and the number keeps growing as the missing are counted. It is already judged to be the deadliest tsunami in modern history. But while the bourgeois media refer to such events (floods, droughts, earthquakes, etc.) as “natural disasters,” the terrible toll in lost lives and devastation they wreak is far more the result of the capitalist society in which such calamities take place.

Although some would certainly have died given the killer waves’ tremendous force and speed, the vast majority of those killed in the Indian Ocean tsunami could still be alive today were it not for a system in which production, housing and every aspect of social life is governed by what is profitable rather than by what’s required to fulfill human needs. Most of those who perished were poor people living in vulnerable locations dangerously close to the sea, because that was where they were forced to huddle under the miserable conditions prevalent in semi-colonial countries. Even many of the tens of

¹ Although commonly referred to as “tidal waves,” tsunamis are not caused by tidal action.



Gautam Singh/AP

Mother cries near bodies of her children, killed when giant waves hit Nagappattinam, in southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. They did not have to die.

thousands who died when the first waves hit the Sumatran coast could have been saved with timely warnings, as the difference between life and death often consisted of being a few dozen or a few hundred meters inland on higher ground. The half hour before Thai beach towns were struck would have been sufficient to get people away from the shore, if an alert were sounded. None of the 30,000-plus victims in Sri Lanka had to die, with 90 minutes to get them out of harm’s way. But their callous rulers made no attempt to warn them.

Now the media are repeating over and over that there was no way the tragedy could have been avoided, that while there is a tsunami warning system in the Pacific, there is none in the Indian Ocean, besides, tsunamis seldom occur there, and so on. Thus the *New York Times* (28 December) reported:

“When experts at the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Honolulu were first alerted that an earthquake had struck Sunday off Indonesia, they had no way of knowing that it had generated a devastating tsunami and no way to warn the people most likely to suffer.

“Tsunamis are rare in the Indian Ocean, which has no system for detecting them and alerting those in danger,

and scientists do not have the tools to tell when an earthquake has created one.

"Not until the deadly wave hit Sri Lanka and the scientists in Honolulu saw news reports of the damage there did they recognize what was happening."

This is a lie. The day before, the *Times* reported, "Within 15 minutes of the earthquake, in fact, scientists running the existing tsunami warning system for the Pacific, where such waves are far more common, sent an alert from their Honolulu hub to 26 participating countries, including Thailand and Indonesia, that destructive waves might be generated by the Sumatra tremors." In fact, a rapid alert was sent out, but it wrongly said that "no destructive tsunami threat exists based on historical earthquake and tsunami data." Their subsequent calls around the region went unheeded.

The non-alert did, however, reach the U.S. Navy in the Indian Ocean and the atoll of Diego Garcia where the Navy and Air Force have installations (and where the CIA keeps many of its "high value prisoners" from Iraq, housed in clandestine jails so that they can be tortured far from the prying eyes of the International Red Cross, nosy reporters and the like). Diego Garcia was hit by high waves but, in part because of the warning, it suffered no significant losses. As for the spurious claim that scientists in Hawaii didn't realize what was happening until the tsunami hit Sri Lanka (an hour after hitting tourist beaches in Thailand?!), it turns out that no less than four earth-orbiting radar satellites just happened to be over the Indian Ocean at the time and from their data scientists were able to measure the height of the waves at different stages. "By chance, these satellites were in the right place at the right time," said Walter H.F. Smith, a geophysicist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration lab in Silver Spring, Maryland, according to an article on the NOAA Internet site.

The lack of warning to the affected populations is only the beginning of how virtually every aspect of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster is determined by the imperialist-dominated capitalist system. Currently the media are full of stories of a vast outpouring of charity and donations from across the globe to provide relief for the victims of the unparalleled tragedy. But the first response from the American White House was to offer a paltry \$15 million in aid. Reporters pointed out that this was less than half the amount budgeted for George W. Bush's lavish second term inauguration celebration, financed by the cash-laden corporations who engineered his reelection. This showed the administration's real priorities were to "party on." Smarting over a United Nations official calling the Western nations "stingy," Bush eventually came out of the brush on his Texas ranch to announce that the U.S. would pony up \$350 million in disaster relief. This was soon topped by Japan at \$500 million, then Germany with \$650 million, followed by \$765 million from Australia, as in a tent revival meeting. Private corporations, too, are getting in on the act: Coca-Cola is donating bottled water to South Asia (where peasants are protesting its siphoning off of local water supplies) while Starbucks promises to donate \$2 to tsunami relief out of every \$10 pound of gourmet Sumatra coffee it sells.

The administration's media spinmeisters soon realized that

human tragedy could be spun into a public relations bonanza. Coming just after Christmas, it could appeal to Bush's right-wing evangelical base as an example of Christian charity. Furthermore, they hoped, maybe it could counteract the hideous images of American soldiers torturing Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. So Colin Powell shows up in Indonesia for a photo op with Florida governor Jeb Bush, and soon the air waves are filled with feel-good TV shots of U.S. helicopters delivering aid to hard-hit coastal towns in Indonesia and ferrying injured victims on stretchers to field hospitals. If they couldn't get the Iraqis to greet the U.S. invaders with hugs and flowers, at least they can get shots of desperate Indonesian Muslims grateful for U.S. aid in their dire straits. But while the media and government pat themselves on the back for "American generosity," it should not be forgotten that the *total* aid pledged by Washington for tsunami relief barely amounts to a day and a half of the cost of the Iraq occupation. The whole cynical exercise is an attempt to build support for U.S. imperialism's criminal war on the Iraqi people.

While U.S. rulers strut before the cameras, the local sa-traps of the American empire use the flood of emergency relief aid to further their vicious wars on minorities. In the Aceh province at the northwestern tip of Sumatra, where almost all of Indonesia's 160,000-plus victims died and hundreds of thousands have been left homeless, cargos of tents, clothing and medical supplies pile up beside the runways. Some 1,000 trucks are reportedly lined up at the airport in Medan. Meanwhile, the TNI (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, Indonesia's armed forces) herds survivors into barely disguised concentration camps guarded by soldiers. These are replicas of the "strategic hamlets" the U.S. set up in Vietnam, intended here to separate the population from the guerrillas of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) which has been fighting for independence for almost 30 years. Now the Indonesian army has announced that foreign aid workers will be restricted to two towns, the capital Banda Aceh and Meulaboh down the coast. The rest of the province is still under a state of "civil emergency," meaning it is a "free fire" zone for the TNI to kill suspected rebels. In addition, security has been tightened around the huge gas fields run by Exxon Mobile in Aceh, which supply much of the natural gas for Japan and South Korea.

At first little was said in the press about the Aceh insurgency, but with reporters swarming through the area it was well-nigh impossible to keep it out of print. But there has been hardly a word printed or broadcast about the Thai government's murderous war on the Muslim minority in the southern region just across the narrow peninsula from where the tsunami hit. Last October, Thai police arrested 1,300 Muslim protesters in Narathiwat province and packed hundreds of prisoners into police trucks where 78 suffocated or were crushed to death. Earlier, in April 2004, Thai military forces shot 107 "suspected Islamic militants" in a single day. Cultivating an image of peaceful Buddhism to attract European and American tourists, this brutal monarchical-military regime is running a reign of terror just out of sight, while workers at the languid beach resorts toil for miserable wages and live in dirt-poor slums. Meanwhile, in Sri Lanka the government makes a show of seeming harmony with the

Tamil minority. President Chandrika Kumaratunga is photographed shaking hands with a commander of the rebel LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and announces she will adopt a Tamil child. But when the UN secretary general Kofi Annan wanted to meet with LTTE guerrillas in the hard-hit Tamil region on the island's east coast, the government nixed it. Now Sinhalese chauvinists are cutting off all direct aid to the Tamil areas.

Through it all, U.S. imperialism is using the recent disasters to extend its support for reactionary forces throughout South and Southeast Asia, while the Pentagon has seized the opportunity to reestablish its presence in the region. In the Philippines, 600 U.S. troops set up operations in the former Clark Air Force Base in early December following heavy typhoons that killed 1,000 Filipinos. In Sri Lanka, 1,200 U.S. troops arrived from Okinawa at the beginning of January, along with another 300

Marines from an expeditionary strike group headed for Iraq, to participate in post-tsunami reconstruction. In Thailand, the former Utapao air base, from which USAF B-52 bombers took off during the Vietnam War, has been reactivated. Most significant of all, Washington is taking advantage of the "humanitarian" opening to resume military aid to the murderous Indonesian military, something the Bush administration has been pushing for since it took office. Already spare parts have been released for the TNI's C-130 air transport planes. Clinton advisor Sidney Blumenthal noted: "The leading neoconservative at the Pentagon, Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defence, has tried to overthrow US restrictions on aid to, and relations with, the Indonesian military" ("The neocons have a hand in Aceh, too," *Guardian* [London], 6 January). Where Wolfowitz goes, war and brutal repression are sure to follow.

From the Enlightenment to the French Revolution **Lisbon, 1755: The Earth Shook**

The effects of natural disasters are refracted through human societies, with differing results. Often they act as a stress test of a social formation, revealing inner weaknesses and fault lines, and in the case of a decaying society, thereby hastening its demise. In other cases, when such traumatic events occur at turning points in history they can act as a catalyst for profound ideological changes, thus contributing to future social upheavals. This was the case of the Lisbon earthquake and tsunami of 1 November 1755, in which it was said 100,000 people died, more than a third of the entire population of the Portuguese capital.

Since the earthquake took place on All Saints' Day and destroyed most of the city's major churches, reactionary priests blamed the destruction on Lisbon's supposed sins. Inquisitors literally roamed the streets looking for heretics to hang. But the grip of the dead hand of the medieval church on society was weakening and eventually broke. Coming at a time when bourgeois forces were growing strong enough to burst the straitjacket of feudalism, the Lisbon disaster played a key role in the Enlightenment, intellectual forerunner for the French Revolution of 1789-1804.

Best-known was the reaction of the French *philosophe* Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet). Voltaire responded to the Lisbon cataclysm, coming shortly after another deadly earthquake in Lima, Peru (1746), in a series of letters, a lengthy poem and the novella *Candide*, questioning blind faith in god and the fatalism that the then-dominant philosophy of "Optimism" engendered. In the preface to his "Poem on the Disaster in Lisbon" (1756) Voltaire wrote mockingly: "All is well, the heirs



National Information Service for Earthquake Engineering/Kozak Collection

Lisbon during the 1755 earthquake, the Tagus River in the foreground.

of the dead will increase their fortunes, masons will make money rebuilding the buildings, beasts feed off the bodies buried in the debris, this is the necessary effect of the necessary causes; your particular misfortune is nothing, you will contribute to the general welfare: such talk would have been as cruel as the earthquake was dreadful."

In *Candide* (1759), Voltaire reported how, "After the earthquake, which had destroyed three-fourths of the city of Lisbon, the sages of that country could think of no means more effectual to preserve the kingdom from utter ruin than to entertain the people with an *auto-da-fé*." It having been decided by the University of Coimbra, that the burning of a few people alive

¹ An *auto-da-fé* (Portuguese for act of faith) is a rite of the Catholic Inquisition in which the sentence was carried out, usually by burning at the stake.

Obscurantist forces ascribe calamities such as the recent Indian Ocean tsunami to the "hand of god" or other supernatural power, often as retribution for the supposed "sins" of humanity. Leading Indonesian Muslim clerics argue that the disaster is a test of faith, while in Sri Lanka some Buddhists blame it on Christians. Such religious claptrap can be used as an opiate to preach passivity to the masses, or as an amphetamine to whip up a sectarian frenzy against infidels and apostates, leading to intercommunal slaughter. Yet even ostensibly enlightened bourgeois organs blame everything on the blind forces of nature. Thus the *New York Times* (27 December 2004) editorializes:

"But except for our obligations to help the victims in any way we can, the underlying story of this tragedy is the overpowering, amoral mechanics of the earth's surface, the movement of plates that grind and shift and slide

against each other with profound indifference to anything but the pressures that drive them. Whenever those forces punctuate human history, they do so tragically. They demonstrate, geologically speaking, how ephemeral our presence is."

It was not the "amoral mechanics" of natural forces that was responsible for the tens of thousands of *avoidable* deaths, but the cold indifference of capitalist rulers for whom the lives of their subjects are cheap. What the terrible toll in human suffering shows is not how fleeting is man's existence but how criminal is the social system that refuses to use *existing* technologies to protect the population. The liberals and reformist pseudo-leftists who call on the government to "help the victims in any way we can" are buying into the false consciousness of fatalism spread by the bourgeoisie. The grievously

by a slow fire, and with great ceremony, is an infallible preventive of earthquakes." Candide's mentor, the optimist philosopher Pangloss, opines that it is all for the good, "all this is for the very best end, for if there is a volcano at Lisbon it could be in no other spot." But when Pangloss is hanged for heresy, the earth shakes again. Candide laments: "If this is the best of all possible worlds, what are the others like?"

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, author of *The Social Contract* and an early critic of private property, objected in a letter to Voltaire (August 1756) to the latter's pessimism and rooted the effects of the disaster not in nature or in human nature but in social conditions:

"Without leaving your Lisbon subject, concede, for example, that it was hardly nature who assembled there twenty-thousand houses of six or seven stories. If the residents of this large city had been more evenly dispersed and less densely housed, the losses would have been fewer or perhaps none at all. Everyone would have fled at the first shock, and would have been seen two days later, twenty leagues away and as happy as if nothing had happened. But we have to stay and expose ourselves to further tremors, many obstinately insisted. Because what we would have to leave behind is worth more than what we could carry away. How many unfortunates perished in this disaster for wanting to take – one his clothing, another his papers, a third his money? They know so well that a person has become the least part of himself, and that he is hardly worth saving if all the rest is lost.

"You would have liked – and who would not have liked – the earthquake to have happened in the middle of some desert, rather than in Lisbon. Can we doubt that they also happen in deserts? But no one talks about those, because they have no ill effects for city gentlemen (the only men about whom anyone cares anything)."

Immanuel Kant, also in 1756, wrote a series of three essays on the causes of earthquakes, in which he inveighed against those who consider these events "destined judgments which the desolated cities meet with on account of their evil deeds," and "God's vengeance on these unfortunate persons, upon whom his justice pours out all its punishments of wrath." Kant sug-

gested instead that men should construct buildings that accommodate themselves to natural phenomena. In addition to the treatises of philosophers, the destruction of Lisbon led to numerous scientific investigations into the causes of earthquakes.

In Portugal, the Marquês de Pombal (Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo), the autocratic chief minister who ruled the country for three decades, turned to practical matters, declaring the task of the hour to be: "Bury the dead and feed the living." He proceeded to rebuild central Lisbon, and used the events to break the power of religious zealots, in particular the Jesuits, whom he exiled from Portugal in 1759. This had the beneficial effect of freeing the schools from Church control, and Portugal became the first country in Europe to build a secular education system. Pombal also instituted protectionist policies to make up for Portugal's industrial backwardness. However, in 1777, King Joseph Emanuel dismissed his chief minister, restored the power of the nobility and the church and reversed Pombal's industrial policies.

As modernizing autocrats found their way blocked by the absolutist monarchies and decaying aristocracies of Europe, the intellectual ferment that became known as the Enlightenment began to flow outside official channels. Today, right-wing reactionaries in France beginning with François Furet want to blame the French Revolution on the Enlightenment – a bunch of free thinkers run amok, in their view – and undo the effects of both.² This is, of course, an idealist, anti-materialist view of history. The French Revolution was fundamentally the result of developing class contradictions in France and elsewhere in West Europe. The *philosophes* were no radicals: Voltaire wanted at most an enlightened monarch. But by questioning the established order of church and king, the Enlightenment (itself the product of a growing bourgeoisie) was among the factors that only a few decades later facilitated a revolutionary upheaval. ■

² After the French Revolution had run its course and the Bourbons were restored in 1814, the tombs of Voltaire and Rousseau in the Pantheon were broken into and their remains removed in sacks and dumped in a pit outside Paris where they were consumed by quicklime.

Bay Ismoyo/AFP



Killers' reunion: U.S. deputy war secretary Paul Wolfowitz, an architect of war on Iraq, on January 16 with Indonesian president, former general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, butcher of Aceh.

suffering survivors will of course take any aid they can get. But revolutionaries must warn that the imperialists and their toadies will at best use such aid to try to put a pretty face on

their dirty wars and colonial occupations, while exploiting the opportunity to intensify their exploitation and oppression, as is happening in Aceh today.

Marxists draw lessons from the tsunami disaster that are diametrically opposed to those propagated by the ruling class. We underline that the massive death toll was the result of the exploitative system that consigns desperately poor populations to a miserable existence, "living" in shacks in ecologically perilous zones, whether clinging to the sides of ravines prone to flash floods in Honduras or crowded onto lowland swampland as in Indonesia where they are prey to killer waves. We stress that the same forces that today are dropping bags of rice from helicopters and handing out candy to children will tomorrow be dropping bombs on the population and torturing the hapless prisoners they round up at random. We point out that the enormous advances of modern science make it possible to counteract the "blind forces of nature," but only if this knowledge is wielded by a society in which the interests of those who toil are supreme.

In response to the Asian tsunami disaster of 2004, the League for the Fourth International calls not to get the capitalist exploiters to "help the victims" but to intensify struggle to sweep away these rapacious ruling classes through international socialist revolution. ■

A "Natural Disaster" Foretold

The media keeps reiterating that there is no history of tsunamis in the Indian Ocean and so the deadly waves could not have been predicted. This is self-serving nonsense. Dr. Tad Murty, vice president of the Tsunami Society who is affiliated with the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canada), told the *Calgary Sun* (28 December 2004) that with 25 minutes to four hours warning time, it was possible to save the victims: "Once again, because of indifference and corruption thousands of innocent people have died needlessly." Moreover, barely three months ago, *AusGeo* (September 2004), an Australian government publication, ran a lead article, noting that "There is an international tsunami warning system for the Pacific Ocean, but none for the Indian Ocean." The article pinpointed the danger of a massive earthquake that could generate a tsunami in precisely the area where it occurred, the northwestern sector of the Sunda Trench off Sumatra. They even did tsunami modeling based on the 1833 Sumatra earthquake which may have been a 9.2 on the Richter scale. The modelling corresponds exactly to what happened three months later.

The *AusGeo* article was titled "Small threat, but WARNING SOUNDED for tsunami research." Why a "small" threat? Because in the numerical simulation by Geoscience Australia, "most of the tsunami energy radiates out into the Indian Ocean and not toward Australia"! This is the same bureaucratic-chauvinist outlook that led the American National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to excuse its initial "no threat" alert with the CYA

(cover your ass) statement that "there was no threat of a tsunami to Hawaii, the West Coast of North America or to other coasts in the Pacific Basin—the U.S. area of responsibility" (noanews, 26 December 2004). No danger to California, no danger to Western Australia, only to a region populated by millions of poor people jammed against the sea? Only a "small threat," then, that's not in their "area of responsibility." Could there be a more devastating admission of national narrowness and imperialist arrogance, or a more powerful argument for international socialist planning?

Even more direct was the warning of the former chief meteorologist of Thailand:

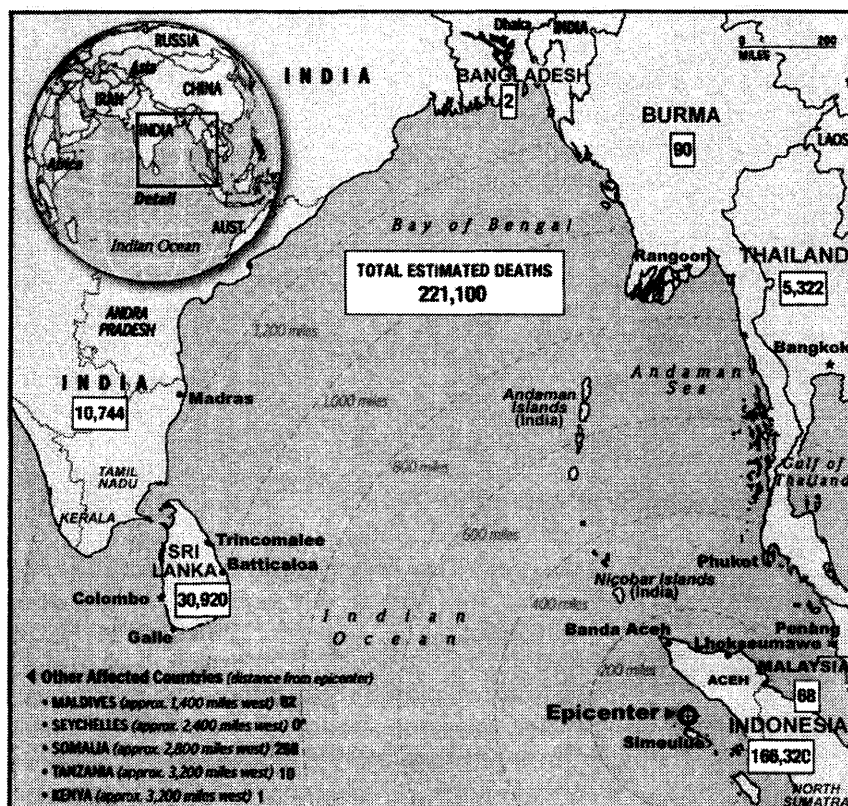
"Seven years ago, Smith Dharmasaroja shook Thailand with a bold and frightening prediction.

"I reaffirm that a tsunami is going to occur for sure," said Mr. Smith, a government official who had once been the nation's chief meteorologist.

"His warning, made first in a speech and picked up by newspapers in the summer of 1998, quickly spread throughout the country, setting off panic — and outrage...

"Government officials, fearful of a washed-up tourist season, branded Mr. Smith a dangerous man with a screw loose. Authorities on the resort island of Phuket fastened loudspeakers to pickup trucks to broadcast a mollifying message to beachgoers — and warned Mr. Smith not to come to town."

—*Wall Street Journal*, 10 January



Map by Farhana Hossain and Laris Karklis, The Washington Post; Brian Cordyack, Nelson Hsu and Alyson Hurt, washingtonpost.com

Mr. Smith studied tsunamis in the Pacific Ocean and noted that every one had begun with an earthquake registering at least 7.4 on the Richter scale. The only place this was likely to occur near Thailand was the geological fault along the Sunda Trench off Sumatra, and he concluded that this would place the beach resort of Phuket directly in a tsunami's path. "If they had just listened," the meteorologist lamented. On the morning of December 26, after reports of the earthquake but before the waves hit Phuket, Mr. Smith tried to reach the Thai meteorological department, but he was unsuccessful.

But in fact, the Thai meteorological department knew of the earthquake and decided *not* to issue a warning, out of concern for the effect on the tourist trade. An article by Pravit Rojanaphruk in the Bangkok daily *The Nation* (28 December) reports that shortly after the quake, department officials convened an emergency meeting. A tsunami had not hit Thailand in 300 years, they reasoned. But, a source told the newspaper, "The very important factor in making the decision was that it's high [tourist] season and hotel rooms were nearly 100-percent full. If we issued a warning, which would have led to evacuation [and if nothing happened], what would happen then? Business would be instantaneously affected. It would be beyond the Meteorological Department's ability to handle. We could go under, if [the tsunami] didn't come." "Precisely at 9 am that Sunday, waves as high as 3 to 10 metres hit the main southern coastal provinces," *The Nation* added. More than merely a case of criminal negligence, we see here how the logic of capitalist economics snuffs out thousands of lives.

The bottom line is that any truly international scientific effort to stem the damage caused by maritime and seismological events would have long ago established warning systems in the Indian Ocean. Punishing cyclones and monsoon storms are a regular occurrence as are the deaths of thousands of Bangladeshis in the periodic flooding of the lowland areas along the Bay of Bengal. The entire Pacific Basin is circled by a "ring of fire" which includes more than four-fifths of the major active volcanoes in the world. These volcanoes are located along the edges of continents, island chains or underwater mountain ranges where the dozen large plates that make up the earth's surface abut. According to the plate-tectonics theory which has been widely accepted since the 1970s, most earthquakes (and many volcanic eruptions) occur at the outer edges of these plates. The Sunda trench is at the extreme western edge of this "ring of fire," where the so-called India Plate "subducts" (goes under) the Burma Plate. Along the west coast of Sumatra is a long string of three dozen volcanoes located to the east of the Sunda Trench.

There are different kinds of earthquakes, and not all produce tsunamis. Where the plates collide laterally (along so-called strike-slip faults), as along the West Coast of the United States, except for the Cascadian fault, the effects are mostly localized. The largest tsunamis generally occur as a result of thrust earthquakes in subduction zones, where one plate slips under another, thus displacing upwards massive quantities of rock and water. In the recent megathrust earthquake off northern Sumatra, the upward shift was estimated at 15-20 meters (50-65 feet) and it extended over an unusually long arc of 1,200 kilometers (750 miles). The initial quake was followed by almost 70 aftershocks and the eruption of a mud volcano in the Andaman Islands to the north. The Sumatra earthquake came just three days after another major quake (8.1 on the Richter scale) in an uninhabited area north of Macquarie Island, at the opposite end of the Indoaustralian plate, which is unusual as such major quakes occur on the average of one a year. The Sumatra quake also came exactly one year (to the hour) after the deadly earthquake in Bam, Iran, that killed some 30,000 people.

Various conspiracy buffs have circulated elaborate theories about how the Sumatra quake could have been part of a diabolical plot set off by mad scientists using the U.S. HAARP (High Altitude Active Aural Research Program) technology being developed as part of the Reagan-Bush Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI, or "Star Wars") in order to seize Aceh oil/gas as part of the rescue. (Of course, the U.S. oil giant Exxon-Mobile already controls the Aceh gas fields.) Going even farther afield, they relate this to the four unusually strong Carib-

bean hurricanes last fall and the recent pounding storms on the U.S. West Coast. Putting aside such conspiracy mongering, and leaving open whether there are some causal relations among recent seismic activity or just coincidence, the fact is (as the Thai meteorologist and Geoscience Australia both warned) that *the area off Sumatra was a logical place for a major earthquake producing a huge tsunami to take place.* It is a geologically young area with lots of volcanic activity, which in the past had unleashed killer waves. In addition to the 1833 quake/tsunami modeled by the Australian scientists, there was the famous

Krakatoa volcano eruption of 1883 which was recently chronicled by Simon Winchester in his book *Krakatoa. The Day the World Exploded, August 27, 1883* (HarperCollins, 2003). This unleashed giant waves up to 40 meters high, killing 36,000 people in the coastal towns and villages of the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra.

As for the measures that could have been and should have been undertaken long ago, the placement of wave sensors on ocean buoys in the Indian Ocean would have been simple. The cost (at \$250,000 each) is minuscule when compared to the vast amounts U.S. imperialism spends on high tech military equipment – but, of course, such devices designed to protect a vulnerable civilian population don't serve to "shock and awe" the Pentagon's adversaries. Indeed, given the amount of U.S. naval activity in the Indian Ocean, it is quite



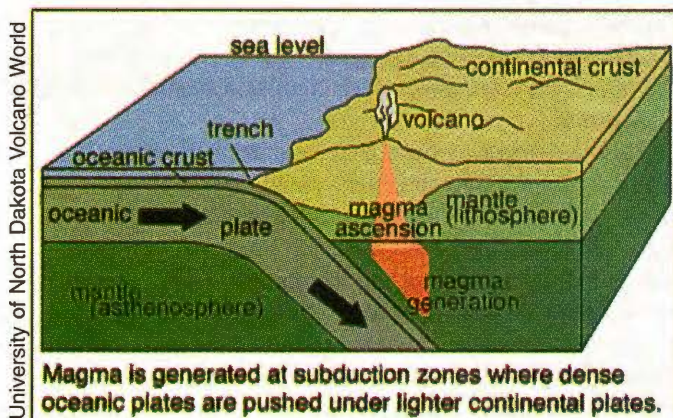
Eugene Hoshiko/AP

Debris-strewn street of Banda Aceh, capital of hard-hit province in northern Sumatra. Reconstruction will take years.

possible that underwater sensors are *already* there (as they are in great quantity in the North Atlantic) and able to detect water movements, but their information is classified. The means for notifying coastal populations of impending danger are more complicated, in the chaotic conditions of semi-colonial capitalism. However, the largest numbers of deaths occurred in coastal cities and towns, where powerful warning sirens could easily be installed just as tornado warning sirens were in the U.S. Great Plains states decades ago. The numbers of deaths now occurring because of untreated injuries becoming infected and festering could have been avoided had Indonesia had a medical system with disaster response teams ready to move.

In short, 225,000 people didn't have to die. There were simple measures to avoid this calamity that could have been taken and should have been taken long ago. Some scientists *did* foresee the possibility of Indian Ocean tsunamis, but their warnings were squelched. Solid housing can be built on safe ground, far enough inland that it is not threatened by pounding seas. An Indian writer in the *New York Times* (14 January) noted that, in contrast to Europe, "the ancient harbor cities of southern Asia ... are often situated upriver, at a cautious distance from open water." But all this implies the existence of a society in which the needs of the population are determining, rather than the interests of the profit-hungry giant "multinational" corporations and the murderous militaries that serve as their guard dogs. It's not a matter of "priorities," as liberals and reformists would have you believe, but of class interests. Although the scientific and medical wherewithal to prevent such horrendous loss of life already exists and is easily available, it will take a revolution to put it in place. ■

Sumatra Subduction Zone



Lessons of 1965 Anti-Communist Slaughter: Not Popular Frontism But Workers Revolution

Indonesian Military Butchers Out of Aceh!

Hardest-hit of all the areas affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami was the Indonesian region of Aceh in northern Sumatra, where over 150,000 died out of a population of 4 million. This immense catastrophe comes after three decades of bloody military occupation. The Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front (ASNLF), currently known as the Free Aceh Movement (GAM – Gerakan Aceh Merdeka), has been fighting for independence of the oil-rich province since 1976. Even prior to the arrival of the Western colonialists in the region, Aceh was a state, based on the clove trade. The Dutch were never able to fully subdue Acehnese resistance, which continued through the 1920s. After World War II, Aceh was a stronghold of the nationalist forces led by Sukarno that tenaciously fought the returning Dutch colonialists, leading to the founding of the Indonesian Republic in 1949. The ASNLF/GAM fight against “Javanese colonialism” was sparked by the brutality of the military dictatorship under General Suharto, who ruled the country for three decades. The screws tightened as Aceh was declared an “area of military operations” after the launching of a guerrilla movement in 1990. But growing mass support for independence dates from the fall of the Suharto dictatorship in 1998 and the referendum that led to U.N.-supervised independence for East Timor the following year.

The elevation of Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of the Indonesian independence leader, from vice president to president of Indonesia in July 2001 raised hopes among some that the oppression of the Acehnese would ease. But after a brief pause in the fighting, military operations against the

**“Autonomy” in a Capitalist Indonesia is a Fraud – Defend the
Right to Independence for Aceh and Other Oppressed Peoples!**



Tyler Hicks/New York Times

Independence fighters of Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Indonesian army and imperialist armies who today provide tsunami relief will tomorrow train their guns on insurgents.

rebels were resumed. Under imperialist pressure from the United States, the European Union, Japan and the World Bank, a cessation of hostilities framework agreement was signed in December 2002. Yet negotiations broke down, and the next May Megawati issued Presidential Decree 28/2003 putting Aceh under martial law. Indonesian Army (TNI) commanders launched a massive offensive, killing thousands and vowing to “crush” the GAM. Although the martial law was formally downgraded to a “civil emergency,” the province has been under iron-fisted rule by some 40,000 Indonesian occupation troops. In addition to those shot during raids, several thousand “suspects” were rounded up and jailed, while scores were kidnapped or “disappeared” (Human Rights Watch, *Aceh Under Martial Law: Inside the Secret War* [December 2003]). Last year, U.S.-based human rights groups denounced the TNI’s systematic use of torture and executions. The Indonesian government replied that the United States was in no position to

denounce abuse after the torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib.

Now 15,000 more Indonesian troops have been brought in under the guise of performing relief missions. But although GAM declared a unilateral ceasefire in order to aid survivors of the tsunami, the army continues to pursue anyone it deems hostile. On January 2, three "rebels" were reported killed, accused of "trying to attack a relief convoy." On January 6, seven men were executed in Lamleh, Aceh as they were salvaging what remained of their ruined house; the military claimed they were GAM "couriers." The Jakarta press reports military operations against independence fighters in a dozen locations. Under the international spotlight, Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono strikes a posture of conciliation; the TNI commander calls on GAM to "forget all problems" and "work with us to help the Acehnese." But Yudhoyono commanded the army during the murderous 2003 onslaught against Aceh, and after a couple of days the army chief declared that GAM "has not heeded my appeal" and therefore he decided to "provide troops to protect all foreigners" (*Jakarta Post*, 11 January). Now foreign aid workers have been restricted to two towns, and as soon as foreign troops (and foreign reporters) are ordered out in March, large-scale killing of Aceh independence supporters will resume in earnest.

The imperialist press, while often critical of the brutal Indonesian military tactics, portrays all Acehnese independence advocates as hardline Muslim fundamentalists who desire a strict "Islamic state," akin to the Moro Islamic independence movements in the southern Philippines (Mindanao and Sulu Islands). The GAM, led by Hasan di Tiro and Zaini Abdullah, both living in exile in Sweden since 1979, looks back to the medieval Islamic sultanate of Achin that was at the height of its power between 1607 and 1636, when it controlled parts of the Malay peninsula. This is hardly a program to inspire mass support from the hard-pressed poor and working people. Nor has the GAM's on-again, off-again guerrilla struggle won broad participation. But three decades-plus of Suharto's brutal "New Order" pushed large sections of the Acehnese masses to support the demand for separation from Indonesia. Thus, as soon as the military lockdown was lifted following Suharto's ouster in 1998, there was a flourishing of groups, some of them vaguely leftist, calling for a referendum on Aceh's right to self-determination. Among these are the Acehnese People's Democratic Resistance Front (FPDRA), the Popular Youth Movement (GPK), associated with the People's Democratic Party (PRD – Partai Rakyat Demokratik), and SEGERA (Solidarity Movement for the People of Aceh).

In November 1999, three months after the U.N.-supervised referendum in East Timor, "hundreds of thousands gathered in the provincial capital, Banda Aceh, calling for a referendum. This



was not a GAM strategy at all" reported Carmel Budiardjo, leader of the London-based TAPOL Indonesian human rights group, in a speech on "State Terror in Indonesia, Past and Present" (November 2001). But despite Megawati's 1999 campaign promises that she would solve the Aceh issue peacefully, killings by the military sharply increased. Up to 100,000 Acehnese were driven into refugee camps during the course of 2001. On June 21 of that year, a suit was filed in U.S. district court in Washington, D.C. against Exxon-Mobil, which has a big oil and natural gas operation in Aceh, holding the company responsible for murder, rape, kidnapping and torture committed by a TNI outfit, Unit 113, which guards its installations around Lhokseumawe, Aceh's second-largest city. All these acts took place *after* the ouster of Suharto in July 1998. The suit charges that Exxon-Mobil not only paid the army guards, but supplied excavators to dig mass graves in which they could dump the bodies of their victims. The U.S. State Department predictably backed Exxon-Mobil, asking that the suit be dismissed. The supposedly democratic Indonesian capitalist government and its U.S. imperialist overlords are interested in the valuable energy supplies rather than in human rights for the Acehnese.

The imperialist press portrays Aceh separatists seeking an "Islamic state" in which "with revenue from Aceh's timber and oil resources at their disposal" they will finance "paid pilgrimages to Mecca" ("Captives of the Cause," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 2 September 1999). Although GAM has a reactionary, backward-looking program, it is hardly waging an Islamic fundamentalist struggle against a secular or "moderate Islamic" government, as the media suggest. In fact, hard-core Islamist forces have been brought into Aceh in recent days *on government planes*, including Laskar Jihad, the military wing of the Indonesia Mujahedin Council (MMI), and the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). The MMI is headed by Abu Bakar Bashir, leader of the Jemaah Islamiyah terror group, who is accused by the U.S. of having links with "Al Qaeda" and of being responsible for the 2002 bombing of a night club in Bali. In fact, for the last four decades the Indonesian army has *always* been in league with the deadliest Islamic terror groups, and from the outset there has been suspicion of military connections to the Bali bombing. The GAM's Aceh "government in exile" issued a January 9 statement de-

Achmad Ibrahim/AP



Trisnadi/AP



Indonesian troops in Lhokseumawe, Aceh (left) in May 2003 as then president Megawati Sukarnoputri (reviewing troops above) issued decree imposing martial law on the rebellious province.

nouncing the provocation of bringing in the FPI, a group of lumpen criminals set up by the generals in August 1998 to fight pro-democracy forces, and the MMI which, it says, carried out “sectarian killings in Maluku [Molucca] and Central Sulawesi and illegal attacks against non-Muslims and others in Java and elsewhere” with guns supplied by the army.

1965 Coup Is Key

Just as Washington’s current Islamic terrorist nemesis, Osama bin Laden, is a creation of U.S. intelligence agencies, which used his services to build up, finance, supply and train an army of Islamic *mujahedin* (holy warriors) to fight against Soviet forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s, so the Islamic fundamentalist terror groups in Indonesia were first created by the army to carry out a bloody purge of leftists and minorities in 1965. It was the mass murder of between 500,000 and 1 million Communists, trade unionists and ethnic Chinese in that year that set the stage for the right-wing “authoritarian” dictatorships and military-based regimes that have dominated Indonesia and Southeast Asia over the last four decades. While U.S. imperialism was losing its dirty colonial war in Indochina to the Vietnamese Communists led by Ho Chi Minh, Washington was able to limit its losses, securing vital trade routes and natural resources (oil, gas, minerals), with the October 1965 Indonesian coup, led by General Suharto, who two years later ousted Sukarno and installed himself in the presidential palace. The fact that opposition to the Indonesian gener-

als’ regime in northern Sumatra has taken the form of Acehnese nationalism is not due to deeply ingrained Muslim religiosity, but rather was *a direct result of the ’65 slaughter which wiped out the left*, that had previously been quite strong in the region.

In 1990, investigative journalist Kathy Kadane reported that CIA and State Department officials admitted that in 1965 they supplied lists of Communists to be liquidated: “names were furnished to the Indonesian army, and the Americans later checked off the names of those who had been killed or captured, according to the U.S. officials” (San Francisco *Examiner*, 20 May 1990). Subsequently released State Department documents confirm this was all done in close coordination with U.S. agencies. In Medan, capital of North Sumatra province, U.S. ambassador Green reported that an army-linked Muslim youth group had “set out to kill leadership of PKI youth organization,” and that the “military director of army-controlled Permina oil company has ordered the arrest, interrogation and execution of PKI leaders in Permina camp.” In Riau province of central Sumatra, U.S. officials reported: “Muslims with army consent have sacked communist premises in city and closed their buildings in countryside. Army has raided PKI leaders’ houses and informed Caltex management it plans on Oct 29 to arrest key leaders of communist oil workers’ union Perbum, which forms core of PKI structure that province.” In Aceh, Ambassador Green reported: “Muslim fervour in Atjeh [province] has apparently put all but few PKI out of action. Atjehese has decapitated [sic] PKI and placed their heads on

Stalinist Class Collaboration Paved the Way

1965 Indonesian Massacre Destroyed Communist Party



In 1965, a plot was set in motion by right-wing Indonesian military officers in league with the United States to slaughter leftist allies of President Sukarno. Centrist officers were killed and their deaths blamed on a fictitious left-wing coup (the "September 30 Movement", above right). Up to one million or more Communists, militant trade-unionists, peasants and ethnic minorities were murdered in the ensuing bloodbath. The U.S. embassy supplied thousands of names of leftists to be killed, and the CIA likely planned the whole affair. In 1967 Sukarno (above, left) resigned, handing power to chief plotter General Suharto (to his right), who ruled for more than three decades. But the massacre was prepared by the class-collaborationism of the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party, demonstrating at right) which as part of its Mao-Stalinist policy of "two-stage revolution" (first stage, bourgeois democracy) subordinated the workers to the "national bourgeoisie" incarnated by Sukarno. Trotskyists fight for *permanent revolution*, for the workers supported by the poor peasants to take power as the Bolsheviks did in Russia in October 1917.



stakes along road" (quotes from *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1999).

While the U.S. imperialists, their Indonesian military flunkies and the Muslim gangs they set up carried out this horrendous massacre, the way for it was prepared by the Communist Party's Stalinist line of a "two-stage" revolution, in which the first "stage" consisted of allying with the "national bourgeoisie" against imperialism. Following the Maoist variant, which calls for a "bloc of four classes," PKI leader Aidit insisted on chaining the party membership to Sukarno and supposedly "left" nationalist officers of the Indonesian armed forces. Even when the TNI officials began murdering Communist leaders, the ranks were ordered not to resist. This was an even more disastrous repetition of the 1927 Shanghai massacre, when Stalin ordered the Chinese CP to subordinate itself to Guomintang leader Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, who then turned around and murdered tens of thousands of CCP cadres and union militants. In Indonesia in '65, the disastrous Stalinist

policy led to the utter destruction of the Communist Party, which at the time had 3 million members and led millions more in militant trade unions and peasants associations.

Today, having learned nothing from this history, virtually the entire Indonesian left pursues a (bourgeois) "democratic" policy that ties them to Sukarno's daughter Megawati, a virulent Indonesian chauvinist who endorsed the 1975 army takeover of East Timor and later opened the door to new army attacks on the Acehese people. Even today, many petty-bourgeois leftists, such as the PRD, favor "autonomy" for Aceh within the framework of an Indonesian bourgeois state. Yet so long as capitalism rules, such phony autonomy can only mask the subjugation of oppressed peoples such as the Acehese or the Papuans of Irian Jaya by a state apparatus that depends on sucking the lifeblood from these impoverished peoples. For their part, GAM and other Acehese supporters of independence seek to imitate the East Timorese independence group FRETILIN, whose entire strategy was to appeal to the imperialists, either through the United Na-

tions or to the U.S. rulers directly. Yet Washington gave the green light to the Indonesian invasion of the former Portuguese colony that led to the murder of 200,000 Timorese (a quarter of the entire population). In Aceh, GAM spokesmen tell reporters they are "thankful for the help to Aceh from foreigners, including Americans, whose military helicopters full of aid supplies" buzz the affected areas (*New York Times*, 17 January).

While many may have illusions in the imperialists, supporters of the Acehnese struggle are wary of the Indonesian army. A January 5 statement of the Indonesian Revolutionary Democratic Party is headlined, "Non-Combat Military Operations in Aceh Are Not an Answer." Yet the PRD *fails to demand outright that the TNI leave the province*. On the contrary, it says that a "full mobilization of the army should have been carried out immediately after the earthquake," but that now army intervention is "both late and no longer urgently required." Far from consistently opposing the capitalist state, its army and the bourgeois parties, in the 1999 elections¹ these petty-bourgeois leftists called for a "a united front with other parties against the common enemies," namely Suharto's supporters, and sought to "force the major opposition parties" and in particular Megawati's "PDI-Struggle – to take a more consistent stand for *reformasi* total" (*GreenLeft Weekly*, 2 June 1999). After the election, in which the PDI-S received a third of the votes, PRD activists declared that for Megawati to become president the Indonesian people should "unite, get on the streets and demand that she become president" (*GLW*, 18 August 1999). *With its talk of "total reform," "people's social democracy" and "revolutionary democracy," and calls for unity and support for Megawati in the streets, the PRD in fact supports the bourgeois order.*

It is not only the Indonesian left. Various ostensibly socialist groups internationally responded to the 1998 upheaval that toppled Suharto by calling for a (bourgeois) *democratic*

revolution. Thus the World Socialist Web Site of David North wrote of "The struggle for democracy in Indonesia" (20 May 1998). Its program was summed up in the demand for a "constituent assembly...to draw up the political framework for genuine reform" – a blatant attempt to sidle up to Megawati's *reformasi* movement. The vague call for "economic security for the workers and urban poor" in no way challenges the capitalist order. An article on "Which social classes support the struggle for democracy in Indonesia?" (WSWS, 20 May 1998) says that "realization of political democracy is inseparable from a progressive resolution of the social issues that confront the masses." While asserting that "key to the struggle for democracy is the independent political mobilization of the working class in the struggle for a workers' government," for them such a government would be "democratic" (i.e., bourgeois) in character. When the Northites say that the "entire economic structure of class privilege and inequality must be replaced by a rational, humane and egalitarian system," their mealy mouthed formulations are intended to avoid calling for socialist revolution to overthrow capitalism.

In contrast, in a December 1998 leaflet, "Indonesia in Turmoil," *The Internationalist* wrote:

"The key question is revolutionary leadership. Trotskyists in Indonesia must seek to build a revolutionary workers party, based on the program of permanent revolution, fighting to realize the most basic democratic demands through workers revolution. Calls for a revolutionary constituent assembly can have a powerful effect in a country that has been ruled by a brutal military regime for more than three decades. But this must be part of a program for workers soviets, not for 'popular democracy' but for a workers and peasants government, not for 'total reform' but for workers revolution, not for bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalism but for proletarian internationalism." ■

Don't Beg for Charity, Fight for Workers Revolution!

In response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, the answer of the left internationally has been to tail after the bourgeois liberals in calling on the *imperialists* to provide more relief. Referring to the "heartbreaking images" being shown on television, the social-democratic International Socialist Organization in the United States asks, "Tsunami horror: Why isn't Bush doing more?" (*Socialist Worker* [Chicago], 7 January). So according to the ISO, the U.S. government should "do more"? What that comes down to is sending more warships and helicopters to the region to distribute aid, so Bush & Co.

can give a "humanitarian" cover to the imperialist war/occupation that is laying waste to Iraq, and so the Pentagon can renew military ties with the Indonesian generals. No thanks. To be sure, the ISO criticizes "America's two corporate-dominated parties, the Republicans and Democrats" for their stininess – studiously avoiding any reference to *capitalist* parties, since the ISO itself supported bourgeois "third party" candidate Ralph Nader in last fall's U.S. presidential elections. This line is the equivalent of the "books/jobs not bombs" that the reformists and liberals push in the antiwar movement, as if it were all a matter of shifting budget priorities rather than *defeating imperialist war*.

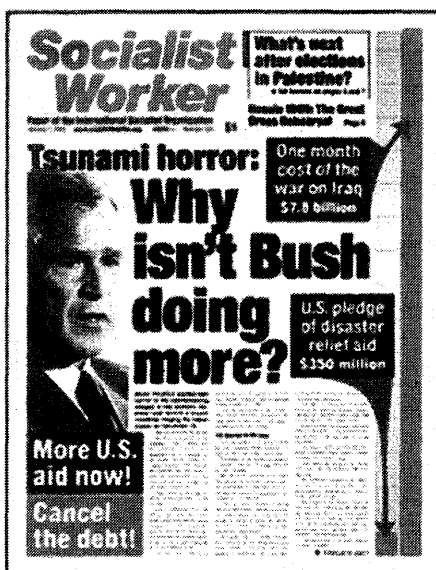
In a similar vein, the ISO's former comrades of the British Socialist Workers Party, followers of the late Tony Cliff, headlined, "Drop the debt: Money for aid, not Iraq war" (*Socialist Worker* [London], 8 January). The British SWP openly panders to liberal moralism, with an article on how the "astonish-

¹ Presidential elections were held in July 1999, in which Megawati's party, the PDI-S, got the largest number of votes, about 33 percent. The lack of a majority threw the selection of the president into the parliament, which voted for Abdurrahman Wahid as president, with Megawati as vice president. When Wahid was impeached on corruption charges in July 2001, Megawati became president.

ing” outpouring of generosity on the part of people around the world shows “The hopeful side of ‘human nature’.” As for the “half-hearted” (!) response of British prime minister Tony Blair and his poodle master across the Atlantic, the SWP writes: “We should not let Blair, Bush and the world’s elites get away with it. We should continue to shame them as we raise solidarity for the tsunami victims.” “Human nature,” “shaming” the imperialist rulers – this thoroughly *classless* appeal places itself squarely on the bourgeois terrain, not even mentioning “socialism” (by which they mean reformist social democracy). As for the Cliffites’ calls to “cancel” the debt, they present the issue as if it’s a matter of pressuring the government into a “wholehearted” response. But in reality, to rip up the imperialist debt it will be necessary to carry out a *socialist revolution*, as the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky did in October 1917, effectively “canceling” the tsarist bonds that soon became worthless on the world market.

The Workers World Party in the U.S., followers of the late Sam Marcy, struck a slightly more militant pose, declaring “Imperialism deepens tsunami’s toll” and that “it is the enforced underdevelopment and consequent impoverishment of this whole region and the imposition of capitalism that has made the masses so vulnerable to excessive suffering during natural catastrophes” (*Workers World*, 13 January). But the WWP’s answer is fulsome praise for the Cuban government of Fidel Castro and a call to “Cancel the debt now.” We have noted (in *Revolution* No. 2, October 2004) how Cuba’s mass mobilization of civil defense managed to prevent all but a small number of deaths (less than in Florida) in the face of hurricane Ivan, and how this contrasted sharply with the deaths of thousands of Haitians left helpless by the puppet colonial occupation government imposed by U.S. imperialism last March. The evacuation of 2 million Cubans from the storm’s path in a matter of hours was only possible on the basis of a collectivized economy. Cuba has an effective medical system and has admirably sent doctors to the four corners of the earth (we could use some in the Bronx!), but as a *bureaucratically deformed* workers state, its nationalist-Stalinist regime undercuts the gains of the revolution by seeking to “peacefully coexist” with imperialism rather than extending socialist revolution throughout the region.

The International Action Center, the all-purpose popular-front coalition (whose co-founder is former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark) now run as a condominium by the WWP and dissident Marcyites led by Brian Becker who split last summer to form the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), calls on the Republicans to cancel Bush’s multi-million-dollar inaugural gala on January 20 – which is about as likely as the imperialists canceling hundreds of billions in debt. Such illusory demands are a vivid illustration of the bankruptcy of reformism. (Their previous



effort was to call on opponents of the Iraq war to refuse to shop for Christmas gifts!) The WWP also urges people to support “grassroots relief efforts” such as the Indonesian Civil Society Coalition for the Victims of Earthquake and Tsunami, the People’s Crisis Center of Aceh and the East Timor Action Network in the United States. Those liberal activists who have braved Indonesian army checkpoints to bring aid to the victims of the tsunami are certainly courageous. But in raising some thousands of dollars, they cannot hope to supplant “official” relief operations of hundreds of millions. Moreover, focusing on providing aid to the victims will ultimately turn into a welfare operation, serving to integrate ostensible leftists into the state apparatus. Precisely this occurred with the pseudo-socialists who formed groups agitating for food and housing aid for victims of the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, and ended up becoming part of the reactionary Salinas government’s “solidarity” program (see article, page 26).

The challenge posed by the Indonesian earthquake/tsunami disaster must be confronted *politically*, not merely in terms of relief aid. For starters, it must be made clear that the chief enemies of the persecuted Acehnese people are the imperialists and the semi-colonial rulers who do their bidding. **All supporters of the Acehnese struggle to get out from under the Indonesian army jackboot should demand that the TNI get out and stay out, and that the imperialist armies of the United States, Australia and Britain, the torturers and tormenters of the Iraqi people, should leave, now!** The amount of actual aid these butchers have delivered pales in comparison to the quantities of urgently needed supplies they are blocking. The Indonesian troops who today put on a “humanitarian” disguise continue to gun down independence fighters, while subjecting refugees to ominous “security checks.” Any presence of imperialist troops, whatever the pretext, is a threat to all Indonesian poor and working people, strengthening the regime of General Bambang Yudhoyono.

To prevent new calamities such as the recent Indian Ocean tsunami, Trotskyists fight against the real causes of mass death and destruction, calling for *international socialist revolution*

Achmad Ibrahim/AP



For workers revolution in Indonesia! Above: march in Jakarta, 1 May 2003, demanding raise in minimum wage. Banners call for government of poor people.

to sweep away capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression. This was the attitude of Lenin toward the famine that ravaged Russia in 1901, coming a decade after another equally deadly wave of mass hunger. The liberals who wanted to go to the villages to feed the starving peasants were unmoved by the arguments of the Marxists, he wrote. "What has the class struggle to do with it? They said; the peasants are starving and we must help them — that is all." Lenin responded:

"But those who could not be convinced by the arguments of the Marxists may perhaps be convinced by the 'arguments' of the Minister of the Interior. No, it is not simply that 'the peasants are starving,' he warns the philanthropists, and they must not 'simply' go to help the peasants without the permission of the authorities, for that spreads demoralisation and stimulates unjustifiable demands....

"There neither is nor can be any other means of combating unemployment and crises, as well as the Asiatic-barbarism and cruel forms the expropriation of the small producers has assumed in Russia, than the class struggle of the revolutionary proletariat against the entire capitalist system. The rulers of the capitalist state are no more concerned about the vast number of famine and crisis victims than a locomotive is concerned about those whom it crushes in its path. Dead bodies stop the wheels, the lo-

comotive halts, it may (with a too energetic driver) jump the rails, but, in any case, after a delay, long or short, it will continue on its way."

—V.I. Lenin, "Review of Home Affairs" (October 1901)

In another article written at the same time, "Fighting the Famine-Stricken," Lenin declares: "We repeat the call issued in *Iskra*: Organise a campaign of exposure against the police government's food policy; expose in the uncensored free press the outrages committed by local satraps, the whole avaricious tactic of curtailing relief, the miserliness and inadequacy of the relief, the despicable attempt to minimize the extent of the famine, and the shameful struggle against those who desire to help the famine-stricken!" Lenin defended the liberals who merely wanted to feed the starving peasants against the capitalist rulers who sought to block or tightly control their efforts. But he underscored that the response of socialists must be to expose the reactionary government and to use these incidents to further the revolutionary class struggle.

Historically, "natural" disasters have often exposed the essence of repressive regimes, and the rulers' response to them has often set off social turmoil and even revolutionary struggle. In the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, the army's indifference to rescuing the victims and the government's abandonment of the tens of thousands who were forced to live in the streets for months produced a wave of opposition to the Institutional Revolutionary Party that had ruled the country for seven decades. Following the 1972 earthquake which destroyed Managua, Nicaragua, killing 10,000 people and leaving 300,000 homeless, the pillaging of homes and looting of relief supplies by the National Guard and the Somoza family's obscene speculation in real estate were a major factor leading to the formation and ultimate victory of the Sandinista National Liberation Front seven years later. On the other hand, the devastating Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the worst hurricane in Central America in 200 years, left up to 17,000 dead in Honduras, the hardest-hit country, as flash floods and mud slides devastated poor communities, but had little political impact. The Clinton government in the U.S. made a show of mounting large-scale disaster relief, but above all there was an absence of leadership to organize opposition to the deeply corrupt death squad regime that has ruled Honduras for decades.

Everywhere, the key is revolutionary leadership. Today, unlike the liberals who merely seek to aid the survivors, and in stark contrast to the reformists who appeal to the capitalist-imperialist governments to "do more" for the tsunami victims, the Trotskyists of the League for the Fourth International insist that the answer must be to fight for international socialist revolution. Installing a few ocean buoys will not prevent new hecatombs, for who will ensure that the warnings are not stopped by short-sighted bureaucrats worried about disturbing the tourist trade; and how will alarms be transmitted to a seaside population living in conditions of desperate poverty, chaos and geographical vulnerability? The answer must be, as Lenin insisted, to wage the "class struggle of the revolutionary proletariat against the entire capitalist system" that produces such tragedies over and over. ■

Forge a Trotskyist Party in Indonesia!

Marxism vs. Islamic Fundamentalism

In Indonesia, with over 170 million Muslims out of a total population of some 216 million people, making it the most populous Muslim country in the world, the policy toward Islam and Islamic fundamentalism is decisive. This has been a key issue ever since the consolidation of colonial rule in the Dutch East Indies in the late 19th century. The 1883 eruption of Krakatoa volcano (see "A 'Natural Disaster' Foretold," p. 14) and the tsunami it unleashed, killing 36,000 Indonesians in the space of a few hours, fed into growing agitation by Sufi Muslim mystics that five years later burst forth in the Banten peasants revolt in western Java. The uprising, described by the chronicler of Krakatoa Simon Winchester as the "Rebellion of a Ruined People," was ruthlessly put down by Dutch colonial troops with their advanced technology (the just introduced repeater rifle). But the unrest first caused by the Dutch cultivation system (*Kultuurstelsel*), a form of colonial slavery confining peasants to their villages until crippling land taxes were paid, continued to fester. By 1912 this led to the formation of Sarekat Islam, an organization founded by small entrepreneurs (who

attacked their ethnic Chinese competitors) that soon developed into a nationalist mass movement in Muslim garb.

Socialist agitation in the Dutch East Indies had until then been limited to Dutch trade-unionists among the urban population. But in 1914 Henk Sneevliet founded the Social-Democratic Union of the Indies (ISDV) and entered Sarekat Islam. This had the effect of transforming the socialist movement from an almost exclusively European affair to one having a largely Indonesian base, but dangerously blurred the distinction between the proletarian internationalism of Marxism and the religious/nationalist ideology of pan-Islamism. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had a tremendous radicalizing effect in Indonesia, ultimately leading to a split in Sarekat Islam and the founding of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI). At the Second Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in July 1920, Sneevliet (under the name Maring) advocated his line, claiming that while the name of Sarekat Islam was religious, it "has taken on a class character," and arguing that "it is a duty for the socialist revolutionary movement to knit firm links with this mass organization, with Sarekat

Beware of Not-So-Non-Governmental Organizations

The "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) in the relief business are a real can of worms. The French Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF — Doctors Without Borders) got its start giving medical aid to the Afghan *mujahedin* who in the 1980s fought against Soviet troops by slitting the throats of leftist teachers for the "crime" of teaching girls to read. Recently the MSF had to close up shop in Baghdad, where it was providing "humanitarian" aid as part of the U.S. colonial occupation of Iraq. Human Rights Watch (HRW), which acts as an advance man for U.S. intervention from Yugoslavia to Asia, fired the head of its African operations in 1993, charging him with "insubordination" for opposing U.S. deployment in Somalia. "Save the Children," one of the first agencies on the ground in Aceh, runs a big operation in Iraq, funded by USAID, which was notorious during the Vietnam War as a front for the CIA.

In New York City, the United Federation of Teachers is encouraging donations to the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Since the 1950s, the IRC has been linked to followers of the anti-Trotskyist renegade Max Shachtman (as are the leaders of the UFT). The IRC was also a conduit for U.S. spy agencies in anti-Communist operations, from Indochina in the 1960s and '70s to Afghanistan in the 1980s. It was run by hard-line anti-Soviet Cold Warriors, including the former chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board Leo Cherne and former CIA director William Casey. For a detailed

account of the IRC's incestuous ties to the U.S. government, see Eric Chester, *Covert Network: Progressives, the International Rescue Committee, and the CIA* (M.E. Sharpe, 1995).

From the 1920s on, when Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration sent a famine relief mission to Soviet Russia to try to undermine the Bolshevik government, U.S. imperialism has always sought to use disaster aid as a wedge for spreading counterrevolution.

In recent years, quite a few self-proclaimed leftists have been sucked into such sinister operations, most notably in the anti-Soviet "Solidarity with Solidarity" drive in the early 1980s. While social democrats of various stripes were passing the bucket for Lech Walesa, the CIA and the Vatican Bank were funneling millions to fund Polish Solidarność. When Walesa & Co. won, taking power in the early 1990s, Polish workers paid the price, with their jobs and social security destroyed under capitalism. In reality, "NGOs" are quite often nothing but covers for imperialist-funded operations, whether by governments or foundations (Ford, Rockefeller and others). The recent funneling of millions of dollars into Ukraine is a prime example of how the U.S. supports the best "democracy" its money can buy.

As a rule of thumb, in the imperialist "human rights" racket, the more innocent-sounding the names (saving children, rescuing refugees), the more likely they are to be straight-out imperialist fronts. ■



Aceh fighters slaughtered by Dutch colonialists in 1873.

Islam.” This fundamentally false perspective was to have grievous consequences.

The Second Congress rejected this orientation and instead proclaimed “the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends, which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landowners and mullahs.” Yet Sneevliet/Maring persisted, and as Comintern delegate in China in the early 1920s he pushed for the fledgling Communist Party to enter the nationalist Guomindang led by Sun Yatsen. This “tactic” was picked up and deepened by Bukharin and Stalin, corresponding to their new “theory” of a “two-stage” revolution which they counterposed to Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution, which summarized the actual experience of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Ultimately this opportunist course led to the Shanghai Massacre of 1927, and in Indonesia (via the Mao-Stalinist “bloc of four classes”) to the PKI’s debacle in 1965 as the “Communists” subordinated themselves to the bourgeois nationalist Sukarno. This mass murder of up to a million Indonesian leftists, in turn, led to the present situation in Indonesia, where opposition to the regime is split between nationalists of minority peoples, like the Acehnese, and Indonesian nationalists who would put a more “progressive” cover on the regime’s chauvinist policies.

Marxists understand that, as Leon Trotsky stated in a July 1924 speech to Soviet cultural workers, “The complete abolition of religion will be achieved only when there is a fully developed socialist system, that is, a technology that frees man from any degrading dependence upon nature.” The Bolsheviks waged anti-religious propaganda, with greater or lesser success, together with spreading scientific education and material efforts to raise the peasantry out of the poverty which is the breeding ground for mystical concepts of salvation in another life. At the same time, it is necessary to vigorously oppose religious customs that oppress women in particular, such as the enforced wearing of the veil and *purdah* (female seclusion), while opposing chauvinist bans in the imperialist countries (as in France currently) which would victimize those wearing Muslim garb. Above all it is necessary to wage a sharp struggle against Islamic fundamentalism, a counterrevolutionary political current that is the mortal enemy of communism and indeed of all social progress, seeking to impose

on modern society reactionary strictures derived from the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century.

From Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s to Iran in 1979 (with the institution of an Islamic Republic) and Iraq today, communists have had to fight tooth and nail against Islamic fundamentalists *as a vital part of our struggle for permanent revolution against the imperialists and their local bourgeois allies and flunkies*. Most often, as in Afghanistan in the 1980s and in Indonesia from 1965 on, the imperialists deliberately foster Islamic fundamentalism as a tool to fight communism. The Trotskyists, in contrast, supported and indeed hailed Soviet forces against CIA-sponsored *mujahedin* in Afghanistan. In the face of the colonial occupation of Iraq, we fight to *defeat the imperialists* without for a moment mixing the red banners of communism with the green banners of Islamic *jihād*. We stress that if today some Islamic fundamentalists oppose the U.S., tomorrow they could be counterrevolutionary allies, as they have been repeatedly in the past. We also warn that U.S. intervention in Indonesia, Philippines and elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia will ultimately be directed against the remaining bureaucratically deformed workers states — China, Vietnam and North Korea — which class-conscious workers must tenaciously defend against imperialism and counterrevolution, both external and internal.

The League for the Fourth International fights to build Trotskyist parties fighting for workers revolution throughout the Indonesian archipelago and the rest of capitalist Southeast Asia, while defending the right to self-determination of oppressed peoples and nationalities such as in Aceh and supporting their struggles for independence from the neo-colonial capitalist states and their repressive apparatuses that have replaced the former colonial rulers. As stated in “The Class War in Southeast Asia” (*The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003):

“The aggression in East Timor, Aceh, Irian Jaya as well as against ethnic Chinese and Christians by the militarist Sukarnoputri in Indonesia, and the war devised by the gunpowder-filled brain of Arroyo against the Bangsamoro in Mindanao as well as against ‘communists,’ ethnic Chinese and Indians, are needed so they can strengthen their class rule.

“*This goes to show that the bourgeoisie in Indonesia, Philippines and elsewhere will do anything to be able to exploit and extract super-profits from the toilers even to the point of instigating wars and placing the blame on the oppressed. This is the reason why the war in Aceh, Irian Jaya and Mindanao, including the Sulu islands, will never end unless the bourgeoisie is brought down. Otherwise, the ‘ethnic cleansing,’ pogroms and killings unleashed against groups that are ‘different’ in race, religion, sex or ethnicity from the dominant bourgeois class in a country will continue. We demand: Fight to defeat the aggression by the bourgeois state against minority ethnic groups and oppressed peoples!! For the right of independence of Aceh, Irian Jaya and Mindanao!! For workers revolutions to end the exploitative and oppressive rule of the bourgeoisie!!*” ■

Revolutionary Opportunity Missed

Mexico 1985: From the Earthquake to the Popular Front

Seldom has the connection between a “natural disaster” and the struggle for revolution been more clearly shown than in the 1985 Mexico City earthquake. The brutal movements of the earth not only destroyed buildings and took tens of thousands of lives, they cracked open the decaying edifice of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) which had run the country uninterrupted since 1929. The PRI-government’s response to the disaster was not only clumsy and slow, but downright criminal. Lines of soldiers stopped residents at gunpoint from digging relatives out of the rubble. Troops guarded machinery in garment factories while blocking workers from getting to their compañeros trapped inside. Prevented from using machinery, thousands of volunteers formed brigades to remove rubble by hand to get to those buried inside. In the following days and weeks, several hundred thousand people were forced to live in the streets, often camped out in front of damaged buildings that had been their homes.

Popular discontent grew exponentially. The autonomous organization to rescue victims continued as camps were built, collective soup kitchens set up, medicine distributed and a fight launched to get the government to provide housing. During the following weeks, demonstrations by garment workers, doctors, nurses and the homeless multiplied. Anger at the state party burned white hot. Yet instead of bringing down the tottering regime and unleashing a revolutionary crisis, the incipient rebellion led to the formation of a *bourgeois* opposition, the popular front led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Leftist groups which played a leading role in mutual aid groups became intermediaries between the government and those who had lost everything. A “Popular Urban Movement” mouthed militant slogans while offering its services to distribute crumbs from the state. Supposed socialists became integrated into the capitalist state machinery, eventually producing the usual corruption scandals. A potentially revolutionary opportunity was wasted.

The lessons for today in the wake of the Asian tsunami are clear. The central response of revolutionaries must be to *intensify revolutionary struggle to sweep away the capitalist system* which was responsible for the vast majority of the deaths.

Social/Political Aftershocks of September 19

On the morning of 19 September 1985, an earthquake registering 8.1 on the Richter scale shook central Mexico, with devastating effects in the capital, the largest city in the world. In seconds, hundreds of buildings collapsed, including apartment houses, schools, hospitals and factories. Estimates of the number of dead range upward from 40,000. Electricity was shut down throughout the metropolitan area, telephone communication was cut off and much of the city had no water. Three hours after the quake, President Miguel de la Madrid issued an appeal for “ev-



Andrés Garay/La Jomada

Volunteers defy government orders and swarm over collapsed building searching for survivors of 19 September 1985 Mexico City earthquake.

everyone [to] go to your homes.” Radio announcers told people to stay inside. In his “chronicles of a society that is organizing itself,” Carlos Monsiváis writes: “Instead of doing as they were told and locking themselves in, people intervened, making up for the government’s limitations and working like ants they brought provisions to aid centers, organized assistance...” (*Entrada libre: crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza* [Ediciones Era, 1987]).

Monsiváis estimates that on September 20 there were up to 150,000 *brigadistas*, and over a million in the coming days. Moreover, the provision of basic services to the population was accomplished not simply by going around the government but by going up against it. The army cordoned off areas and troops proceeded to pillage the ruins. The quake also uncovered the subterranean jail cells below the offices of the attorney general of the federal district, where the bodies of prisoners were found with clear signs of torture and of having been murdered by the police. In addition, it soon became notorious that the construction of most of the buildings that collapsed was substandard.

Humberto Musacchio, who published a book of eye-witness accounts, *Ciudad quebrada* (Joaquín Mortiz, 1995), wrote later:

"The tragedy of 1985 was the result of uncontrollable natural forces, but also of real-estate speculation, corruption, the irresponsibility and ignorance of legions of officials who have in their hands a population deprived of elementary political rights."

—*Reforma*, 17 September 1995

It is widely recognized that the experience of the 1985 earthquake led to the sharp setback suffered by the PRI presidential candidate in 1988, Carlos Salinas, who was losing to challenger Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas when the election computers mysteriously crashed. Yet the enormous social discontent with the rotting regime was diverted into the dead-end of capitalist electoralism, in favor of a bourgeois popular front that was created around the figure of Cárdenas in order to squelch a radicalization of working-class struggle. A decade later, when Cárdenas was elected head of government of the Federal District, a left-wing legislator and former student leader, Martí Batres, said that this was "the result of intense social, civic and political struggles, the students in 1968, the trade-union insurgency in the 1970s, the neighborhood organization following the 1985 earthquakes" (*La Jornada*, 6 December 1997). But while some erstwhile leftists became *cardenistas*, others went on the payroll of the Salinas government. Musacchio noted:

"The immense and moving solidarity of those days led Carlos Salinas de Gortari, having become president of the republic, to decide to use that social energy on his behalf. With no scruples whatsoever, he called the main program of his government 'Solidarity' [Programa Nacional de Solidaridad, Pronasol], by which he 'delivered' public works to the population as if it were a personal donation."

—*Reforma*, 17 September 1995

One of the organizations that sprung up following the 1985 earthquake was the September 19 Union of Residents and Victims (UVyD), led by Alejandro Varas, a follower of the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno. At the time, Varas was a member of the mainstream Moreniste organization in Mexico, the Partido Obrero Socialista (POS – Socialist Workers Party); in the '90s, after several years of distributing aid from the Salinas and Zedillo governments, Varas split to form UNIOS (Unidad Obrera y Socialista), a phantom organization which as an officially registered "APN" (national political association) is eligible for government subsidies. As a purveyor of government payments to earthquake victims, the UVyD together with other organizations of the "Popular Urban Movement" – including the Frente del Pueblo (affiliated with UNIOS), the Frente Popular Francisco Villa and others – later joined an Advisory Council on Urban Development and Housing of the Federal District government.

Through their participation in Salinas' Pronasol, several of these "leftist" outfits effectively became *palero* (satellite) parties of the PRI. If they occasionally put on oppositional airs, it is because the government of the capital city is now in the hands of Cárdenas' Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). But whether under the PRI or the PRD, they have become part of the machinery of the capitalist government. An indication of what this can lead to was seen in the corruption scandal which exploded in

1996 over the school breakfasts distributed by left-led neighborhood organizations formed after the '85 quake. According to *La Jornada* (18 November 1996), a series of "urban movement" groups – including the Unión Popular Nueva Tenochtitlán, Liberación Proletaria, Bloque de Organizaciones Sociales, Campamento Francisco Villa, Unión Revolucionaria Vida Digna and the UVyD – were accused of charging for breakfasts for children of families who did not live at the addresses registered, overcharging for breakfasts and similar typical acts of corruption.

Even left groups which claimed to oppose such overt subordination to the bourgeois state engaged in similar practices through the back door. Thus the pseudo-Trotskyist Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (PRT – Revolutionary Workers Party), followers of the late Ernest Mandel, ran its own "independent" candidate (Rosario Ibarra) in the 1988 presidential election, but simultaneously gave under the table support to Cárdenas. For a number of years, the PRT had been registered as a national political party, and used government subsidies to finance its newspaper, *Bandera Socialista*, and other party activities. But when Cárdenas sucked up the opposition vote, the government decided it no longer needed the services of the PRT and cancelled its registration on the grounds that it hadn't gotten enough votes. Their government subsidy gone, the Mandelites were left with almost no financial resources and the PRT collapsed, its newspaper ceased to publish. Thereupon the Mandelites threw all vestiges of phony class independence aside and in the 1994 election the PRT openly campaigned for "its" candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of the PRD.

In summing up his chronicle of 19 September 1985, Carlos Monsiváis wrote:

"The sense of the epic actions of Thursday the 19th will not be seriously examined so long as they are exclusively limited to the concept of *solidarity*. That there was, and in a very beautiful manner, but as the starting point for an attitude that...seeks to take over the part of government that legitimately belongs to the citizenry. On the 19th, and in response to the victims, Mexico City saw a *seizing of powers*, one of the noblest in its history, going far beyond mere solidarity, which was the conversion of a people into the government, and official disorder into civic order."

—*Entrada libre*

Monsiváis' reference to "*seizing of powers*" is subtly counterposed to actually *seizing power*; his talk of the "citizenry" taking over part of the government that "legitimately" belongs to it is opposed to the *working class* bringing down the *capitalist* government. His is the program of the petty-bourgeois "civil society" which became enamored of EZLN leader Subcomandante Marcos precisely because he says that the Zapatistas are *not* fighting for power. Yet the fight to seize power from the bourgeoisie is key. Today, as the drama of the Asian tsunami moves the world, the experience of the 1985 Mexico City earthquake and its political aftermath are a cautionary tale of *what is not to be done*. The Grupo Internacionalista and the League for the Fourth International are seeking to build an authentically Trotskyist party in Mexico, for which the fight for socialist revolution is not empty rhetoric but the guiding line of its action in every field. ■

From the Revolutionary Archives

Martinique

By Rosa Luxemburg

On 8 May 1902, the volcano Mt. Pelée on the Caribbean island of Martinique erupted, destroying St. Pierre (until then the capital of the French colony) and killing 40,000 people. In the face of the hypocritical hand-wringing of the bourgeoisie, the German-Polish Jewish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg wrote this fiery article, which appeared in the Leipziger Volkszeitung on 15 May 1902. The English translation is by David Wolff; the text is taken from the Marxist Internet Archive.

Mountains of smoking ruins, heaps of mangled corpses, a steaming, smoking sea of fire wherever you turn, mud and ashes – that is all that remains of the flourishing little city which perched on the rocky slope of the volcano like a fluttering swallow. For some time the angry giant had been heard to rumble and rage against this human presumption, the blind self-conceit of the two-legged dwarfs. Great-hearted even in his wrath, a true giant, he warned the reckless creatures that crawled at his feet. He smoked, spewed out fiery clouds, in his bosom there was seething and boiling and explosions like rifle volleys and cannon thunder. But the lords of the earth, those who ordain human destiny, remained with faith unshaken – in their own wisdom.

On the 7th, the commission dispatched by the government announced to the anxious people of St. Pierre that all was in order in heaven and on earth. All is in order, no cause for alarm! – as they said on the eve of the Oath of the Tennis Court in the dance-intoxicated halls of Louis XVI, while in the crater of the revolutionary volcano fiery lava was gathering for the fearful eruption. All is in order, peace and quiet everywhere! – as they said in Vienna and Berlin on the eve of the March eruption 50 years ago. The old, long-suffering titan of Martinique paid no heed to the reports of the honorable commission: after the people had been reassured by the governor on the 7th, he erupted in the early hours of the 8th and buried in a few minutes the governor, the commission, the people, houses, streets and ships under the fiery exhalation of his indignant heart.

The work was radically thorough. Forty thousand human lives mowed down, a handful of trembling refugees rescued – the old giant can rumble and bubble in peace, he has shown his might, he has fearfully avenged the slight to his primordial power.

And now in the ruins of the annihilated city on Martinique a new guest arrives, unknown, never seen before – the human being. Not lords and bondsmen, not Blacks and whites, not rich and poor, not plantation owners and wage slaves – human beings have appeared on the tiny shattered island, human beings who feel only the pain and see only the disaster, who only want to help and succor. Old Mt. Pelée has worked a miracle! Forgotten are the days of Fashoda¹, forgotten the conflict over Cuba², forgotten “la Revanche”³ – the French

and the English, the tsar and the Senate of Washington, Germany and Holland donate money, send telegrams, extend the helping hand. A brotherhood of peoples against nature’s burning hatred, a resurrection of humanism on the ruins of human culture. The price of recalling their humanity was high, but thundering Mt. Pelée had a voice to catch their ear.

France weeps over the tiny island’s 40,000 corpses, and the whole world hastens to dry the tears of the Mother Republic. But how was it then, centuries ago, when France spilled blood in torrents for the Lesser and Greater Antilles? In the sea off the east coast of Africa lies a volcanic island – Madagascar: 50 years ago there we saw the disconsolate Republic who weeps for her lost children today, how she bowed the obstinate native people to her yoke with chains and the sword. No volcano opened its crater there: the mouths of French cannons spewed out death and annihilation; French artillery fire swept thousands of flowering human lives from the face of the earth until a free people lay prostrate on the ground, until the brown queen of the “savages” was dragged off as a trophy to the “City of Light” [Paris].

On the Asiatic coast, washed by the waves of the ocean, lie the smiling Philippines. Six years ago we saw the benevolent Yankees, we saw the Washington Senate at work there. Not fire-spewing mountains – there, American rifles mowed down human lives in heaps; the sugar cartel Senate which today sends golden dollars to Martinique, thousands upon thousands, to coax life back from the ruins, sent cannon upon cannon, warship upon warship, golden dollars millions upon millions to Cuba, to sow death and devastation.

Yesterday, today – far off in the African south, where only a few years ago a tranquil little people lived by their labor and in peace, there we saw how the English wreak havoc, these same Englishmen who in Martinique save the children for the mothers and the parents for the children: there we saw them stamp on human bodies, on children’s corpses with brutal soldiers’ boots, wading in pools of blood, death and misery before them and behind.

Ah, and the Russians, the rescuing, helping, weeping Tsar of All the Russians – an old acquaintance! We have seen you on the ramparts of Praga⁴, where warm Polish blood flowed in streams and turned the sky red with its steam. But those were the old days. No! Now, only a few weeks ago, we have seen you benevolent Russians on your dusty highways, in ruined Russian villages eye to eye with the ragged, wildly agitated, grumbling mob; gunfire rattled, gasping muzhiks fell to the earth, red peasant blood mingled with the dust of the highway. They must die, they must fall because their bodies doubled up with hunger, because they cried out for bread, for bread!

And we have seen you too, oh Mother Republic, you tear-distiller. It was on May 23 of 1871: the glorious spring sun shone down on Paris; thousands of pale human beings in working clothes stood packed together in the streets, in prison court-

continued on page 39

¹ The 1898 clash between Britain and France over control of the Sudan.

² The 1898 Spanish-American war over Cuba and the Philippines.

³ “The Revenge,” the French movement to retake Alsace and Lorraine, lost to Germany in the 1870 war.

⁴ In eastern Warsaw, site of the 1830 uprising against tsarist rule.

Attention Wal-Mart Workers! Union Victory in Quebec



Internationalist photo

"Our prices are lower" – the wages too. Wal-Mart in Jonquière, Quebec.

It'll Take Hard Class Struggle to Beat the Labor-Hating Giant

The following article is expanded from an Internationalist Group leaflet distributed at the September 1 Labor Day demonstration in New York.

In the 1990s, as higher-paid industrial jobs disappeared, the only "alternative" for many laid-off workers in hard-hit "Rust Belt" communities, and for millions of young people joining the workforce, was minimum-wage work flipping hamburgers at the local McDonalds: "*McJobs*," we called them. Today, "*Walmartization*" has come to symbolize the assault on workers' pay and conditions internationally. Wal-Mart, the Bentonville, Arkansas-based retail chain, is now the largest employer in the United States, with 1.3 million workers who average \$9.50 an hour. Out of their toil, the mega-company racks up \$270 billion in yearly sales and \$60 billion in annual profits. Not a single one of its 3,500 stores in the U.S., 633 stores in Mexico and 225 stores in Canada is unionized. *Until now.*

On August 2, the Quebec Labor Relations Board ruled that a majority of the hourly employees of the Wal-Mart store in Jonquière (part of the city of Saguenay), had signed up with the union, and on that basis it recognized Local 503 of the TUAC (Canadian United Food and Commercial Workers) as their representative. TUAC is part of the Quebec Labour Federation (FTQ) and affiliated with the American UFCW. The fact that workers in this northern region had won a union, making it the only unionized Wal-Mart store in all of North America, should put Jonquière on the map of the labor movement. It was big news around the world. The London *Guardian* (4 August 2004) ran a story, "Wal-Mart's Quebec staff win union rights." It made the news in Mexico (*La Jornada*, 4 August), where Wal-Mart is also the largest em-

ployer. But U.S. papers blacked it out.

Wal-Mart is synonymous with the destruction of unionized jobs with wage levels and benefits won through years of hard struggle, replaced by \$8 an hour entry-level pay, with minimal or no health insurance and pension. A viciously anti-labor management which regiments employees with daily meetings and chants, tries to brainwash them with company ideology (the thoughts of Sam Walton), discriminates against women, forces its "associates" to work through their meal breaks, locks cleaning crews (many of them undocumented immigrants without rights, hired through subcontractors) in at night, and in the blink of an eye



Pascal Rathé/Le Devoir

"Our team makes all the difference" – Wal-Mart caught by surprise by union victory at Jonquière, Quebec.

Photos: Mishell Potvin



More than 5,000 demonstrated in Saguenay, 31 January 2004, in solidarity with Alcan aluminum workers who occupied plant in faces of Alcan bosses' threat to close foundry.

fires anyone who looks cross-eyed at a manager: that's Wal-Mart. The mere rumor that Wal-Mart might open a store locally has led competitors to slash wages and benefits wholesale.

The threat of Wal-Mart setting up stores in southern California set off the bitter UFCW supermarket strike that lasted from October 2003 to February 2004 and ended in a defeat for the union, with wages for new hires cut by up to \$2.80 an hour, worker "co-payments" for health insurance introduced, employer medical payments capped, and company pension fund payments cut (see "California Grocery Strike Sold Out," *The Internationalist* No. 18, May-June 2004). In June, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) headed by Andrew Stern announced a \$1 million organizing drive at Wal-Mart. The same week, a federal judge ruled that workers could sue the company in a class-action suit for sex discrimination. But looking to the bosses' courts and throwing in some dollars will not organize Wal-Mart. *It will take hard class struggle.*

The Internationalist traveled to northern Quebec in mid-August to speak with the Wal-Mart workers. We arrived as they were about to begin a celebration of their victory. Union members and Local 503 officials were in high spirits. Scoring against the union-busting behemoth is no small thing. The arrogant Wal-Mart bosses are used to steamrolling over anything that gets in their way. But the roughly 170 workers at Jonquière, 80 percent of them women, wouldn't lie down to be rolled over – they stood up to fight for their rights. It's what one might expect in this solid union town. Yet Wal-Mart management was taken by surprise. They figured they had the union beat when TUAD narrowly lost a representation election in April. But the workers came right back at them, and three months later they had signed up enough so that the union had a solid majority even if the company tried to include management employees, "plus a few customers on Monday morning," said UFCW International rep Herman Dallaire.

Union militants told us that the key issues were wages and "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" – which is spelled the same in French or English, and Wal-Mart bosses don't get it or give it. Starting pay is \$8 Canadian an hour (which works out to under US\$6), little more

than the legal minimum wage in Quebec, compared to \$13 at the unionized Costco in nearby Chicoutimi. Theoretically this could rise to \$9.50 after several years, but the store hasn't been open that long. Of course, with the rampant favoritism, those employees who go along and get along with management may be named "department managers," who are just glorified foremen paid a few dollars more. No cases of overt sexual harassment were cited, but what really made the women furious was how Wal-Mart managers tried to humiliate individual workers in the morning meetings, "saying that they are lazy...that they ask for days off." It was after one such session that they called up the union.

"If a manager notices an employee not applauding or singing the [company] song in the morning several times, it's noted and that means a definite loss of a \$10 raise. We also want to put a stop to the practice of new women workers advancing over the more experienced workers," a union supporter told the *Saguenay Progrès-Dimanche* (28 March). Another acutely felt complaint is the absence of planning the workweek in advance. (28 hours a week is considered full-time, and many women work as few as 12 hours a week.) They are essentially "on call," like temporary workers, and if they turn down work, that will be noted in the yearly evaluation. This is particularly difficult for women who have to juggle work and family. "For example, what if you have a child who is sick and you miss work?"

One woman said she had always worked under union conditions, and wasn't about to take this kind of guff. They already tried in 2002 to organize a union, affiliated with the CSN (National Union Federation), which ended in a defeat. But she and another woman weren't deterred. When Wal-Mart tried its ploy of locking the cleaning crew in at night, workers denounced this illegal abuse and forced the company to abandon it. By December 2003, enough Wal-Mart employees had signed cards for TUAD to force a new election. Local 503 president Marie-Josée Lemieux said that key in beating back company harassment was the existence of a workers' committee inside the store. What was decisive, Dallaire told *Recto Verso* (January-February 2004), was that "we have a couple of courageous and determined women on the scene."

Another vital factor was the tradition of union struggle in Quebec generally and particularly in the Saguenay-Lac-St.-Jean region, an industrial area of huge lumber, paper, hydro-electric and aluminum mills. Last December, when the Liberal Party government of Jean Charest was getting ready to push anti-union laws through parliament, thousands of unionists converged on the National Assembly in Quebec City in the midst of a snow-storm, surrounding it, pelting the building with snowballs, eggs and yellow paint. Highway 175 north to Chicoutimi was cut off by a demonstration of 800 and truckers who dumped huge loads of sand on the pavement, effectively sealing off the region. This only ended when the Surêté de Québec police intervened at midnight to arrest 15 people, including the FTQ representative, Jean-Marc Crevier. Two days later, several thousand workers in Saguenay marched to protest the indefinite layoff of 640 workers by the Abitibi-Consolidated paper mill at La Baie. On May 1, the FTQ, CSN and other union federations called a huge demonstration in Montréal which brought out between 75,000 and 100,000 demonstrators – the largest May Day march in Quebec's history.

In January, the management of Alcan announced at the gathering of the international capitalist elite in Davos, Switzerland that it was planning to close the Söderburg smelter of the aluminum multinational's Arvida plant in Jonquière. Instead of just accepting this body blow, the 550 workers of the smelter and their union, the SNEAA (affiliated with the Canadian Auto Workers), occupied the plant, continuing to produce for 19 days until the Quebec Labor Relations Board ruled their action illegal. Pointing out that the company wanted to use the power from the foundry to supply other aluminum plants in the region, the workers demanded the nationalization of Alcan's hydroelectric installations in Saguenay/Lac-St.-Jean (*L'aut-courriel*, 11 February 2004). The workers' occupation of the plant sent shock waves around Canada and drew broad support in the region, with a January 31 protest demo of more than 5,000 supporters. But the action of the labor board here should shatter any illusions that workers could somehow get justice from the capitalist courts and government.

Instead of limiting the occupation to a single foundry scheduled to be closed, the unions should have shut down production at all Alcan plants. This is still a burning question, as more than 800 workers at the ABI aluminum plant at Bécancour in the city of Trois-Rivières have been on strike since July 7. ABI management is threatening to bring in scabs, despite a Quebec law that supposedly prevents the use of "replacement workers." Simultaneously, some 400 iron ore workers in Sept-Îles on the north coast of the St. Lawrence River have been striking since the beginning of August. And now, Alcan is threatening to shut its Vaudreuil plant at Jonquière, threatening the jobs of 1,200 workers. If Wal-Mart management tries to play hardball to defeat the unionization attempt at Jonquière (for example, by threatening to close the store, as McDonald's did in Montréal), the key to labor victory will be mobilizing unions throughout the region which have real industrial power.

Ultimately, the battle to unionize Wal-Mart, from a single store in the forests of northern Quebec to the entire multinational chain, will pose a sharp class battle. And as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels noted over a century and a half ago,

every serious class struggle is a political struggle. What's needed is a workers leadership that can stand up to the courts, the cops, and the capitalist parties and government they serve. UFCW leaders look to Quebec because local labor laws are more favorable than in the U.S. or elsewhere in Canada, permitting a simple "card check" rather than a phony election to decide union representation, in which bosses freely intimidate workers with threats and bribes. But the fight to win a union will not be won by playing by the bosses' rules.

Quebec's rate of union representation far exceeds anywhere else in North America (42 percent of all workers, compared to 13 percent in the U.S.). It didn't get that way by bowing down to or basing the struggle on what is or is not permitted by the bosses' legal arsenal. Today, Quebec unions face a frontal attack by Charest with his plan for "reengineering Quebec." Writing in Quebec's *Le Soleil* (3 December 2003), Normand Provencher asked if Charest intended "A Wal-Mart Government?":

"And if reengineering the state in these times of free trade and globalization simply comes down to the Wal-Mart approach: create lots of non-union jobs, with the lowest possible wages and social benefits. Is that what's in store for Quebec workers?"

The FTQ, CSN and other unions have passed resolutions calling for a "general strike" against the Liberal Charest government and its anti-union laws ... when the leaderships judge the timing to be right. But a real general strike is not a big parade but a showdown with the bourgeoisie, a knock-down, drag-out battle to decide "who is master in the house," on the order of the tumultuous 1972 Quebec general strike in which Sept-Îles was taken over by the workers. But the 1972 strike ran into the ground precisely for the lack of a revolutionary leadership.

Bosses all over Quebec are alarmed by the accreditation of the Wal-Mart union. The business weekly *Les Affaires* (14 August) headlines, "Quebec, Paradise for the Unions." This organ of the employers complains that not only is the unionization rate higher than anywhere on the continent, while it has been falling elsewhere, in Quebec it has been rising in recent years. At the same time, the article notes that Metro supermarkets (organized by TUAC/UFCW) are "demanding a wage cut in order to remain competitive faced with the imminent arrival of Sam's Club in Quebec...." In fact, as history professor Jacques Rouillard of the University of Montréal points out, "The unions are on the defensive" (quoted in a feature article, "Quebec Unionism in Quicksand," in Montréal's *Le Devoir* (7-8 August). Rouillard, author of *Le syndicalisme québécois: deux siècles d'histoire* (Boréal, 2004) is pessimistic: "We're always expecting a turnaround with the union movement taking the offensive, but it hasn't happened. Governments always put the economy ahead of social questions." Yet these are *capitalist governments* who will *always* stand on the side of the bosses against the workers!

To defeat a giant like Wal-Mart, working people must look to their own class power. Victory will not be won by relying on the bourgeois courts, labor departments and politicians, nor by appealing to localism, nationalism and protectionism, but by mobilizing the strength of working people around the globe. The battle

Mishell Patvin



800 workers from Saguenay block Route 175 north from Quebec in protest over Charest government union-busting laws, 11 December 2003.

over unionization in Quebec is part of the overall class struggle internationally, which in the past couple of years has seen a demonstration of 250,000 in Montréal (and 3,000 in Chicoutimi) against the Iraq War ... as well as a practice occupation of Sherbrooke by the Canadian Army (which put the whole of Quebec under martial law in 1970). The imperialist war on Iraq (and the occupation of Haiti by Canadian imperialist troops) is intimately linked to the bosses' war on the workers "at home."

For years, Quebec has been rent by battles over its status in the Canadian state. Quebec labor is tied to the Parti Québécois (PQ), a nationalist capitalist party which represents certain layers of the local ruling class, who would like to cut a better deal with U.S. imperialism by loosening their ties to the rest of Canada, in the formula "sovereignty-association." The Liberals have solid support from other Quebec capitalists who would like to join in the exploitation of the working class across Canada. The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International call for independence of Quebec, at the same time as we fight on the program of proletarian internationalism against the bourgeois nationalists as well as the petty-bourgeois nationalists such as the Union des Forces Progressistes (UFP), SPQLibre and Option Citoyenne who orbit around the PQ.

Periodically, when Wal-Mart stores or McDonald's restaurants have opened, there have been calls for consumer boycotts, often with a protectionist/nationalist flavor, such as the campaign to "boycott American products" publicized by "anti-globalization" liberals of "Alternatives." Such campaigns target Wal-Mart employees along with the bosses, while dividing workers along national lines. But Quebec bosses are no better than their U.S. or English Canadian counterparts. The Quebecor World conglomerate, headed by Pierre Karl Péladeau, is the largest printer of periodicals and catalogues in the world, including *Time* maga-

zine and the Victoria's Secret catalogue. Péladeau, a former Maoist (one-time member of En Lutte!) not only broke the strike at Vidéotron (which he bought with money from the PQ government) but is charged with racist union busting by black women workers in Quebecor World printing plants in Memphis, Tennessee and Mississippi.

The struggle at Wal-Mart and Arvida in Jonquière, as well as the struggles of tens of thousands of militant Québécois workers, requires ousting pro-capitalist leaders who tie the unions to the bosses and their parties. In the United States as well, the battle against "Walmartization" will be fought out politically. Republican vice-president Cheney praises Wal-Mart as a showpiece of the Bush administration's economic policies, while Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry piously criticizes the company's failure to provide benefits. Yet the Democrats are no answer: it shouldn't be forgotten that Hillary Rodham Clinton was a lawyer for and for six years a board member of Wal-Mart.

From Quebec to the U.S., the struggle against imperialist war "abroad" and capitalist war on the working people, minorities, immigrants and poor "at home" requires the forging of a class-struggle workers party that fights for a workers government and international socialist revolution. ■



Unionists surrounded Quebec's National Assembly on 15 December 2003 to protest Charest government's union-busting laws.

Against All the Oligarchs, Capitalists and CIA-Backed
"Opposition" – Build a Trotskyist Workers Party!

U.S.-Sponsored Coup d'État in Ukraine

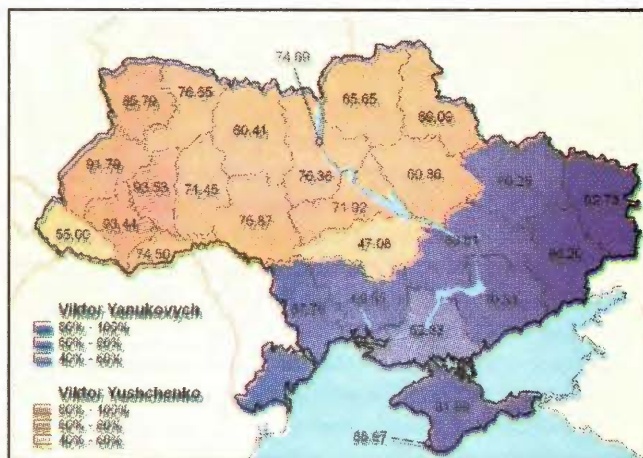


Gleb Garanich/Reuters

Supporters with orange flags of Our Ukraine party of Viktor Yushchenko rally in Independence Square in the center of Kiev on November 22. Elaborate "People's Power" charade orchestrated and financed by U.S.

Since this article was published, the Ukrainian opposition, with considerable backing from U.S. and European imperialism, forced a new election, held December 25, in which Yushchenko won with 51.99 percent of the vote, according to official figures.

DECEMBER 12 – The scenario has become familiar in what U.S. geopoliticians are now calling the "post-Soviet space." A closely contested election, a disputed result, crowds gathered in the central square of the capital to protest vote fraud. Well-financed opposition coalitions, flashy youth groups and telegenic spokesmen mount a savvy media operation. "Non-governmental organizations" (NGOs) pop out of the ground like mushrooms after a rain. Liberals denounce the incumbents as heavy-handed dictators unable to shed their erstwhile Communist ways. Washington issues insistent calls to overturn the outcome and install its favored candidate in the name of a "free vote" and free markets. The stage is set, the crowds grow menacing...



Sven Teschke/Wikipedia

Map of November 2004 election results by region. Note sharp polarization between Russian-speaking east and Ukrainian-speaking western regions.



Miners from the eastern Donbas rallied at the central rail station in Kiev, November 26, in support of the Party of Regions led by Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. For a revolutionary mobilization of Ukrainian workers independent of all the capitalist clans!

In September 2000, the scene was played out in Belgrade, Yugoslavia where Slobodan Milosevic was toppled after losing the one-sided Kosovo war with NATO the year before. Vojislav Kostunica was installed as Serbia's prime minister, put there by the DOS (Democratic Opposition of Serbia) led by Zoran Djindjic and the youth group Otpor! ("Resistance!"). In November 2003, the film was rerun in Tblisi, Georgia, where the opposition led by Mikhail Saakashvili, a New York-trained lawyer, and the youth group Kmara! ("Enough!"), ran out the government of Edvard Shevardnadze. Then they held the "democratic" election: 96 percent for Saakashvili. Behind it all: the hand of U.S. imperialism. Now it is Ukraine's turn...

And tomorrow, Belarus? Romania? Kazakhstan? It depends on Washington's priorities at the moment. The U.S. invades Iraq, supposedly in search of "weapons of mass destruction," because it knows full well that Baghdad doesn't have "WMDs" (otherwise the Pentagon would have hesitated quite a while). In contrast, it tries to strong-arm North Korea with diplomacy rather than threatening invasion, precisely because it isn't sure if Pyongyang has the bomb or not. Different strokes for different folks. But whether it's Democrats or Republicans at the helm, whether the target is Saddam Hussein or Kim Jong Il or Leonid Kuchma, the constant is a drive for world domination, for untrammelled U.S. imperialist hegemony. Their aim is to encircle Russia and keep "Old Europe" in line. No wonder Russian president Vladimir Putin is muttering about a throwback to the Cold War.

On November 23, the second round of voting in Ukraine's

presidential election led to a near-tie that soon became a standoff. The official electoral commission declared Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, the candidate favored by outgoing Ukrainian president Kuchma, to be the winner by 49 percent to 46 percent for the opposition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko. Yet Independence Square was already filled with tens of thousands of the latter's supporters with their orange banners, flags and other paraphernalia. Speaking from the tribune, Yushchenko, his face ravaged due to an illness reportedly caused by dioxin poisoning, declared himself the winner. The Western media cried "fraud" and announced that an "orange revolution" was in the offing. (In Georgia, they called it the "rose revolution.")

For over two weeks, Yushchenko's supporters have camped out in the center of Kiev, blockading central government buildings. Normally, U.S. media

and government spokesmen denounce actions against "legitimate" capitalist governments, but in Ukraine there is an operation going on, so the usual rules don't apply. The Ukrainian government made a half-hearted attempt to bring in a few thousand miners from eastern Ukraine to support Yanukovich, but left them hanging around the train station and eventually sent them home. Officials in mostly Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine began talking of holding a referendum for regional autonomy. Kuchma flew to Moscow for encouragement from Putin. But as the security forces began to crumble and the heretofore tame Supreme Court declared the election invalid, the Ukrainian president backed down. A rerun of the vote has been ordered for December 26.

In the *electoral* contest between two bourgeois forces, the American-backed Ukrainian nationalists around Yushchenko vs. the Russian-backed "oligarchs" behind Yanukovich, class-conscious workers and authentic communists must vigorously oppose both the contending forces. All sides are squalid in this sordid dispute over which gang of capitalists shall exploit the Ukrainian proletariat. Both Yushchenko and Yanukovich have called on workers to strike, but on behalf of their own bourgeois parties. While stressing in the West our class opposition to the imperialist power grab, in Ukraine it is no less important to break the working class from its illusions in and political support to the "post-Soviet managers" around Yanukovich, who are blocking any real struggle against the U.S.-bankrolled free marketeers. A Trotskyist party is urgently needed in Ukraine to fight not

only against the feuding oligarchs but also against the Stalinist politics of class collaboration that ties the workers to their class enemy.

U.S.-Orchestrated "People's Power" Charade

This whole spectacle purporting to show the masses yearning to be free is actually a minutely choreographed coup d'état orchestrated by the U.S. The actors change but the script is the same. In Ukraine, Yushchenko played the role of Kostunica in Yugoslavia and Saakashvili in Georgia, the "respectable" bourgeois opposition. The counterpart in the Ukraine to Serbia's Djindjic as the pro-Western "radical" is Yulia Tymoshenko, who regularly issues ultimatums to Kuchma. The student/youth group Pora! (Time's Up!) is the equivalent of Otpor! in Belgrade and Kmara! in Tbilisi. The resemblance of these pseudo-oppositions is by no means accidental: they all come from the same "cookie cutter." And behind them all is the hand of U.S. imperialism. In a commentary in the London *Guardian* (26

November), "Ukraine's Postmodern Coup d'État," columnist Jonathan Steele noted, "Yushchenko got the US nod, and money flooded in to his supporters." Steele elaborated:

"Intervening in foreign elections, under the guise of an impartial interest in helping civil society, has become the run-up to the postmodern coup d'état, the CIA-sponsored third world uprising of cold war days adapted to post-Soviet conditions. Instruments of democracy are used selectively to topple unpopular dictators, once a successor candidate or regime has been groomed.

"In Ukraine's case this is playing with fire. Not only is the country geographically and culturally divided - a recipe for partition or even civil war - it is also an important neighbour to Russia. ...

"Ukraine has been turned into a geostrategic matter not by Moscow but by the US, which refuses to abandon its cold war policy of encircling Russia and seeking to pull every former Soviet republic to its side."

The mammoth production resembles a Hollywood spectacular, boasting a cast of hundreds of thousands. While many protesters doubtless feel they are demonstrating for freedom, they are actually pawns in a giant charade. The operation is heavily financed by Washington, to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, funneled through the National Endowment

for Democracy (NED) and its subsidiaries, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), working in tandem with the Open Society Institute (OSI) of international financier and multi-billionaire currency speculator George Soros and the more traditional anti-Communist conduits like Freedom House. The NED was set up in 1983 explicitly to fund counterrevolutionary forces around the world, replacing the clandestine dollar pipeline from the CIA whose "dirty tricks" had brought the U.S. into disrepute. Polish Solidarność and the Nicaraguan contras were some of the first big recipients of this largesse. But it

wasn't just used against Soviet-allied nationalist regimes.

The model for the current operation was the "people's power" revolt in the Philippines that ousted strongman Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. Then, too, you had huge crowds massing in opposition to a decaying authoritarian regime that had become a liability to the U.S. There was a dramatic, made-for-TV confrontation, and



Ivan Sekretarev/AP

Viktor Yushchenko (left), Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yanukovich after negotiations on presidential elections outcome, 26 November 2004.

moments of farce as Ted Koppel of ABC's *Nightline* switched on-screen between Marcos and the "rebel" leaders, reminiscent of Howard Cossell interviewing El Presidente in Woody Allen's movie *Bananas*. In the end, the power ended up not with "the people" but in the hands of Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos, with Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, scion of one of the leading landowning families, installed as figurehead president. Communists and other radicals, whose popularity had been growing in opposition to Marcos' brutal rule, were effectively sidelined by the elaborate manipulation - with their popular-front politics they were beholden to bourgeois allies, who then did them in.

This scenario has been repeatedly used by Washington in subsequent years, including in a second "people's power" revolt in the Philippines in 2001. The movie runs smoothest when the "heavy," the worn-out dictator, is played by someone who used to be a U.S. protégé and knows to go when his time is up. (Marcos went to Hawaii, Panama's Noriega was a little slow on the uptake, so he ended up in jail in Miami.) The same techniques were used to bring down Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004, bundling him off in an unmarked plane to Central Africa. But it doesn't always work. The U.S. tried a variant in Venezuela in December 2002, after its earlier (April 2002) coup attempt failed. It tried to pass off a management lockout as a workers strike - but that flopped,

too, as the mass of poor and working people went into the streets to defend the nationalist government of Hugo Chávez. In the August 2004 Venezuelan referendum, the pro-imperialist opposition was soundly trounced.

In Ukraine, the "people's power" masquerade was in full swing. In the *Guardian* (27 November), the Thatcherite conservative John Laughland commented:

"Whether it is Albania in 1997, Serbia in 2000, Georgia last November or Ukraine now, our media regularly peddle the same fairy tale about how youthful demonstrators manage to bring down an authoritarian regime, simply by attending a rock concert in a central square. Two million anti-war demonstrators can stream through the streets of London and be politically ignored, but a few tens of thousands in central Kiev are proclaimed to be 'the people'.... The demonstrations in favour of Viktor Yushchenko have laser lights, plasma screens, sophisticated sound systems, rock concerts, tents to camp in and huge quantities of orange clothing; yet we happily dupe ourselves that they are spontaneous."

The day before, the *Guardian* East Europe correspondent Ian Traynor wrote on the "US Campaign Behind the Turmoil in Kiev," detailing "a sophisticated and brilliantly conceived exercise in western branding and mass marketing that, in four countries in four years, has been used to try to salvage rigged elections and topple unsavoury regimes." He notes the striking similarities between the youth groups in Yugoslavia, Georgia and Ukraine, saying "the young Belgrade activists are for hire." In fact, some of the Otpor professional youth organizers from Belgrade were sent by the U.S. to Georgia last year to train Kmara. This year they trained the Ukrainian Pora in seminars in the Baltic states. In Belgrade, Traynor writes, the U.S. officially reported spending \$41 million on the year-long effort to topple Milosevic starting in October 1999. "In Ukraine, the figure is said to be around \$14 million."

The U.S. has focused considerable attention on Ukraine for years, ever since the break-up of the Soviet Union and destruction of the degenerated workers state in 1991-92. The most notable fact about this is that, while George Bush is reaping the harvest, it has been mostly a Democratic Party operation. In 1994, an "American-Ukrainian Advisory Committee" was set up as a "private initiative" in a meeting with Bill Clinton's deputy secretary of state, Strobe Talbot. This high-octane "bi-partisan" outfit was chaired by former president Jimmy Carter and included Zbigniew Brzezinski (Carter's national security advisor), Henry Kissinger (Richard Nixon's national security advisor), Frank Carlucci (Ronald Reagan's national security advisor, as well as deputy director of the CIA and secretary of defense), "capitalist tool" Malcolm Forbes, Jr. and George Soros (see the Center for Media and Democracy's *Disinfopeedia*, 27 September).

The Hungarian-born financier Soros, whose latest venture was to spend millions financing the campaign of Democrat John Kerry this year (notably through the "NGO" MoveOn.org), set up the "Ukrainian Renaissance Foundation" in 1989, before the demise of the Soviet Union. He helped install Kuchma as Ukrainian president in the 1994 election, boasts that he has given "more than US\$100 million to support

Ukraine," and "helped it gain access to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank." Yet more than three years ago, Soros was calling on his former protégé Kuchma to "step aside" and make way for his prime minister Yushchenko and former deputy prime minister Tymoshenko (*Financial Times*, 2 March 2001). Another key Democrat who has been pushing for "regime change" in Kiev is Madeleine Albright, Clinton's former secretary of state and currently chairman of the NDI. Last spring, Albright wrote an article in the *New York Times* (8 March) with advice on "How to Help Ukraine Vote." Among her suggestions: "increase support for independent news media and civil society" and set up "training sites for voter mobilization and monitoring efforts."

In addition to the Democrats' NDI, the Republicans' "IRI also conducts poll watcher training," according to its web site. Having fine-tuned its election-manipulation expertise in Broward County, Florida, the gang in the White House wants to export its hardball techniques worldwide. The presence of Republican Richard Lugar, head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as the designated "personal representative" of U.S. president Bush in Kiev during the elections was proof positive that a gigantic operation was underway. Lugar's announcement that the Ukrainian government allegedly conducted a "corrupted and forceful program of election day abuse" amounted to marching orders to the media and assorted "international observers" to ratchet up their accusations of vote fraud to fever pitch. In addition to NDI and IRI delegations in Kiev for the voting, after assiduously building up an apparatus for several years, the partner parties of U.S. imperialism funded a small army of more than 1,000 European poll watchers. When the official results didn't match their "exit polls," this was taken by the media as prima facie evidence of election fraud. In Kiev, that is, but not in Ohio or Florida.

The Ukrainian Pivot: Imperialist Geopolitics and the Working Class

While the Bush gang in Washington, driven by a coalition of pro-Israeli neo-conservatives ("neo-cons"), military contractors and the oil industry, was mesmerized by the monomania of occupying Iraq, the Democratic geostrategist Zbigniew Brzezinski focused on a series of "pivots" crucial to U.S. imperialist domination of the post-Soviet world, among them Ukraine:

"Ukraine, Azerbaijan, South Korea, Turkey and Iran play the role of critically important geopolitical pivots....

"Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire....

"However, if Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its 52 million people and major resources as well as access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically again regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia....

"For Ukraine, the central issues are the future character of the CIS and freer access to energy sources, which would lessen Ukraine's dependence on Russia.

"Neither the West nor Russia can afford to lose Ukraine to



Madison Avenue goes to East Europe for the CIA. Logos of the Yugoslav youth movement Otpor! (Resistance), above left, and the Ukrainian youth movement Pora! (Time's Up), above right. Right: Priests in front of banner with Yushchenko election slogan Tak! (Yes). Notice any resemblance?

its geostrategic and geoeconomic adversary."

—*The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (Basic Books, 1997)

Speaking at the American Enterprise Institute following the Ukrainian elections, Brzezinski remarked that "if Ukrainian democracy prevails" (i.e., if Yushchenko emerges as the victor), "Russia has no choice but to go to the West," but that if Putin's man Yanukovich comes out on top, Russia's "imperial ambitions are awakened" (*Moscow News*, 1 December). "The stakes are of truly historic proportions," he added. Some Western pundits (along with some misguided leftists) inveigh against "Russian imperialism," as the imperialist Cold Warriors used to denounce "Soviet imperialism." But the capitalist Russian Federation which resulted from the destruction of the Soviet Union, a bureaucratically degenerated workers state, is not (or at least, not yet) an imperialist power, not withstanding the imperial ambitions of Putin and his predecessor Boris Yeltsin (for example, in their dirty war against Chechnya).

The Ukrainian election has been seen as a showdown in a proxy conflict between ex-Soviet Russia and the United States that would shape world events. The Ukrainian forces in contention are caricatured as pro-Washington "democrats" vs. pro-Moscow "oligarchs." Imperialist liberals piously intone that it's all about "democracy," supposedly having nothing to do with an "East-West conflict," but this is just eyewash. In reality, both Kuchma/Yanukovich and Yushchenko/Tymoshenko have sought to balance between Russia and the

U.S., and both represent the narrow layer of capitalist profiteers who have grown obscenely wealthy by feeding off the remains of the Soviet degenerated workers state. The working people of Ukraine paid the price, as their average incomes plummeted to about \$50 a month while industries were sold off for a song.

Ukrainian president Kuchma was the head of the group of "oligarchs" originating in the industrial center of Dniepropetrovsk (where he formerly headed a missile plant), who with U.S. backing threw out former Soviet bureaucrat Leonid Kravchuk in the 1994 elections and proceeded to privatize (in their own interests) the giant economic powerhouses of central and eastern Ukraine. Yanukovich was a former electrician and mechanical engineer who became governor of Donetsk oblast in the heart of the eastern coal mining region (the Donbas). Viktor Yushchenko was a former Soviet banking official while Yulia Tymoshenko was brought to Kiev on Kuchma's coattails. While she now poses as a firebrand mass agitator, her hair done in Ukrainian peasant style, Tymoshenko is a multi-billionaire who set

up the United Energy System. Matthew Brzezinski (Zbigniew's son), who was a *Wall Street Journal* reporter in Moscow, devotes a chapter to Tymoshenko, "The Eleven Billion Dollar Woman," in his book *Casino Moscow: A Tale of Greed and Adventure on Capitalism's Wildest Frontier* (Free Press, 2001).

Yushchenko was named prime minister by Kuchma on the basis of his "success" as head of Ukraine's national bank in carrying out the introduction of the hryvnia as Ukraine's convertible currency. Yet this led to huge increases in prices (bread up 300 percent, electricity up 600 percent, public transportation up 900 percent), leading to a fall of real wages by more than 75 percent since 1991, according to IMF statistics. Deregulation of the grain market led to a drastic fall in agricultural production (Michel Chossudovsky, "IMF Sponsored 'Democracy' in the Ukraine," www.globalresearch.ca, 28 November). Upon becoming head of government, Yushchenko proceeded to carry out a drastic IMF-ordered retrenchment policy that led to the shutdown of many factories and at least 35 of Ukraine's mines. The World Bank called for closing half the mines, calling the coal mining region "a lost cause" (*Christian Science Monitor*, 15 May 2002). These plans led to Yushchenko being sacked in a parliamentary vote of no confidence fueled by workers' anger and discontent among the managers of the "Donetsk clan" led by Rinat Achmetov, one of the richest men in Ukraine.

As for the No. 2 of the opposition, Kiev correspondent James Meek asks in an article on "The Millionaire Revolutionary" (*Guardian*, 26 November): "But who is Tymoshenko? Is

she the dedicated champion of free-market values, Ukrainian independence and European liberal ideals she and her supporters would claim her to be? Or is she a darker, more compromised figure, whose own record might tarnish an opposition victory?" Meek notes that, "the vast personal enrichment of Tymoshenko when so many ordinary Ukrainians were going poor and hungry made her unpopular in the late 1990s." In early 2001 she was jailed for a month on corruption charges. So here are the paladins of "democracy" that are posing as leaders of the "people": the man responsible for the immiseration of millions of Ukrainian workers and a woman who grew filthy rich by looting the wealth created by collectivized industry! A good part of the reason why roughly half of the Ukraine voted for Yanukovich is that in recent years the coal industry has been booming, the eastern cities have been resuscitated and workers there have a vivid memory of the misery associated with Yushchenko's earlier period in office.

Moreover, the opposition is a diverse conglomeration, including not only Yushchenko's Our Ukraine party and Tymoshenko's Fatherland party, but also a number of smaller groups: Oleksandr Moroz, leader of the Socialist Party of Ukraine (SPU), who received about 6 percent of the vote in the first round of the elections on October, endorsed Yushchenko on the second round. Yushchenko's parliamentary bloc also includes the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (KUN), the inheritors of the mantle of the anti-Communist Ukrainian fascist Stepan Bandera, whose bands initially fought alongside the German invaders in World War II, and after the end of the war went back into the swamps to wage guerrilla war with clandestine U.S. aid against the victorious Red Army. Various other ultra-rightist groups are or have been allied with Our Ukraine, including the All-Ukrainian Party of Liberty, until its leader was quoted in the press praising the WWII Ukrainian partisans for "cleans[ing] the country of Russians and Jews," whereupon Yushchenko dropped the group ("Ukraine: ultra-right groups active in Ukrainian opposition," World Socialist Web Site, 7 December).

In fact, the opposition coalition is shot through with anti-Semitism. Reporters going through the crowds of demonstrators outside the Ukrainian parliament (Rada) have encountered members of the UNA (Ukrainian National Assembly), which is not only fascist in its ideology, it has Nazi shock troops (their symbol is a stylized swastika) organized in UNSO who have attacked leftists. Moreover, the SPU newspaper, *Silski Visti*, with one of the largest circulations in the country, last year printed a grotesquely anti-Semitic article peddling the absurd claim that "400,000" Jews joined the Nazi SS during the German invasion of the Ukraine. SPU leader said he personally thought the article was "incorrect," but the editor of the "socialist" paper, Vasily Gruzin, said he believed "the figure of 400,000 Jews taking part in the German invasion of the Ukraine is not far from the truth." Gruzin added, "I personally have nothing against common Jews, but rather against a small group of Jewish oligarchs who control Ukraine both economically and politically. I believe the point of Zionism today is Jewish control of the world, and we see this process at work in Ukraine today" (JTA, 19 September). This anti-Semitic filth is coming not from fascists but from the "socialist"

voice of the "democratic" opposition in Ukraine!

At bottom, there are few real policy differences between the contending bourgeois forces in Ukraine. Kuchma and Yanukovich have sought to satisfy Washington's demands, going so far as to send a contingent of Ukrainian troops to Iraq. (Now that the Iraqi occupation has become an increasingly bloody and risky affair, both candidates have said they will pull Ukrainian troops out.) Kuchma joined the GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) military alliance cobbled together by the U.S. as a counter to Russia, which was inaugurated at the 50th anniversary celebrations of NATO in Washington in April 1999 at the outset of NATO's war on Yugoslavia. Yanukovich has vowed to uphold the Kuchma/Yushchenko/Tymoshenko privatizations and has carried out IMF/World Bank economic policies. Yet this was not enough for U.S. imperialism, which wants to install a team of even more unconditional supporters in Kiev. Rather than looking to the bourgeois politicians representing the various clans of "oligarchs," and who are competing for U.S. favor while hoping to stay on good terms with Russia, Ukrainian workers need to build a revolutionary workers party that will oppose all the capitalist factions with sharp class struggle.

For a Trotskyist Party in Ukraine!

The Communist Party of Ukraine (KPU) represents certain sectors of the former Stalinist *nomenklatura* who want to falsely pose as defenders of the workers. While running a candidate in the first round of the presidential election (Petro Simonenko, who received about 5 percent of the vote), the KPU formally called for no support to either candidate in the second round – although this was widely understood as freeing up its supporters to vote for Yanukovich. During the January 2001 anti-government mobilizations, when the SPU of Moroz formed a Ukrainian nationalist coalition, "Ukraine Without Kuchma," with Yushchenko supporters including the UNA/UNSO fascists, the Russian chauvinist KPU set up a competing coalition, "Ukraine without Kuchma and Yushchenko" together with Russian fascistic elements.

The KPU's strength (it has about 20 percent of the Rada deputies) is concentrated in the Russian-speaking eastern industrial and mining region. The proposal by regional legislators in the East and Southeast of a referendum on autonomy, which is denounced by Yushchenko & Co. as a threat of secession, is based on this linguistic division. The eastern half of the country is largely Russian-speaking and even in Kiev, Russian is reportedly the language of business and government, whereas the western regions are predominantly Ukrainian-speaking (with enclaves of Polish and Romanian speakers). Leninists, of course, defend full rights for all languages spoken by the population. But in reality there is no popular push to split the country. The talk of autonomy is an attempt to divert opposition to Yushchenko into a bourgeois framework, and due above all to the absence of a revolutionary class opposition to the capitalist politicians.

Among the groups in the former Soviet Union which claim to be revolutionary are the supporters of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) led by Peter Taaffe and his Socialist Party in Britain. The CWI published an article by Rob

Jones of its Socialist Resistance group in Moscow, under the title "Ukraine: Neither Yanukovich nor Yushenko" (28 November). The CWI claims to support neither of the bourgeois candidates, and criticizes Yushchenko's pretense of supporting democracy and defending Ukrainian national interests as head of the "Ukraine without Kuchma" movement in 2001. Yet it fails to mention that the CWI took part in that pro-U.S. imperialist "movement." The article notes:

"The lack of any focal point in the election put some left activists and the so called left political technologists (spin doctors) in a dilemma. Unfortunately a number saw this as an opportunity to earn money by working for one of the two warring camps. This only heightened the scepticism that many workers have at so called 'lefts' who offer empty phrases when times are relatively stable but, when the action picks up, flock to where the money is best."

The CWI should know, for its own Ukrainian supporters organized an elaborate scam pretending to set up Ukrainian sections of ten or more international groupings, including the League for the Fourth International (see our article on "A Band of Political Imposters and Swindlers in Ukraine," *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003). Although it was the leadership of the CWI's Ukrainian group which organized this bizarre fraud, with the participation of a leading member of its Moscow group, the Taaffeites shamefully have said almost nothing about this publicly and gave their Moscow member a mere temporary suspension. Oleg Vernik, the former CWI Ukrainian leader, was reportedly sighted decked out in orange in an opposition event.

The CWI's article on the election suggests "an independent workers' candidate opposed to the competing elite cliques." But while talking about "nationalisation under workers' control and management of Ukrainian industry" and "a workers' party with a socialist policy," this amounts to a call for a slightly more left-wing social-democratic party along the lines of the "old" Labour Party in Britain. It certainly does not call for preparation of socialist revolution. Rather, its program consists overwhelmingly of (bourgeois) *democratic* demands, appealing to the Yushchenko camp's Ukrainian nationalist base with calls for "special schools and cultural programmes ... to redress the balance after years of the Stalinist suppression of Ukrainian language and culture," for "a genuinely democratic people's assembly" (rather than soviet bodies of revolutionary workers democracy), and so on. Not a word about Trotsky or Trotskyism in the very homeland of the Bolshevik leader, although the CWI falsely claims to be Trotskyist.

With its opportunist politics, the CWI is inevitably drawn into tailing after every "mass movement," throwing in a few "critical" remarks as a fig leaf to cover up its capitulation to anti-proletarian and outright reactionary forces. The Taaffeites' actions in Ukraine today are of a piece with their stance at the key turning point in the destruction of the Soviet Union, in August 1991, when *Militant* (the CWI's British progenitor) joined the bulk of the pseudo-Trotskyist imposters in hailing Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter coup (which was orchestrated directly from the vacation home of U.S. president George Bush I) as representing "people's power reducing the threat of dic-

tatorship to a poorly scripted farce"! Genuine Trotskyists, rather than swallowing the "people's power" lies of the bourgeois media, called for Soviet workers to smash Yeltsin/Bush counterrevolution, and to sweep away the treacherous Stalinist bureaucrats who by conciliating imperialism had prepared the way for counterrevolution and blocked the revolutionary mobilization necessary to defeat the capitalist restorationists.

In fact, the real answer to decades of Stalinist perversion of Bolshevism and betrayal of the revolution is a fight to build an authentic Trotskyist party, not just a workers party with a vaguely "socialist" (read, social-democratic) program. A Trotskyist nucleus fighting to build such a party would emphasize the need for a broadscale mobilization of the working class to oppose both capitalist cliques and to fight with workers action the layoffs and further privatizations that are in store, whichever bourgeois candidate is declared winner in the third round of voting. Rather than adopting the framework of Ukrainian nationalism, or that of Russian chauvinism, it would fight on an internationalist basis to extend revolutionary struggle against capitalist rule to the neighboring Russian mining and industrial areas and to all the former Soviet lands, and further westward into the imperialist centers. It would call for proletarian strike action against the imperialist war on Iraq and Ukraine's participation in the colonial occupation. In raising this program, the League for the Fourth International continues to fight to bring the legacy of Lenin and Trotsky to the homeland of the October Revolution. ■

Martinique...

continued from page 28

yards, body to body and head to head; through loopholes in the walls, mitrailleuses [machine guns] thrust their bloodthirsty muzzles. No volcano erupted, no lava stream poured down. Your cannons, Mother Republic, were turned on the tight-packed crowd, screams of pain rent the air – over 20,000 corpses covered the pavements of Paris!⁵

And all of you – whether French and English, Russians and Germans, Italians and Americans – we have seen you all together once before in brotherly accord, united in a great league of nations, helping and guiding each other: it was in China.⁶ There too you forgot all quarrels among yourselves, there too you made a peace of peoples – for mutual murder and the torch. Ha, how the pigtailed fell in rows before your bullets, like a ripe grainfield lashed by the hail! Ha, how the wailing women plunged into the water, their dead in their cold arms, fleeing the tortures of your ardent embraces!

And now they have all turned to Martinique, all one heart and one mind again; they help, rescue, dry the tears and curse the havoc-wreaking volcano. Mt. Pelée, great-hearted giant, you can laugh; you can look down in loathing at these benevolent murderers, at these weeping carnivores, at these beasts in Samaritan's clothing. But a day will come when another volcano lifts its voice of thunder: a volcano that is seething and boiling, whether you heed it or not, and will sweep the whole sanctimonious, blood-splattered culture from the face of the earth. And only on its ruins will the nations come together in true humanity, which will know but one deadly foe – blind, dead nature. ■

⁵ The suppression of the Paris Commune.

⁶ Against the "Boxer Rebellion" of 1898-1900.

Needed: A Revolutionary Leadership

The Mexican Working Class Is Fighting Back

Eduardo Verdugo/AP



On August 4, workers surrounded the Mexican Senate, blocked the capital's main avenues and fought with police in an attempt to prevent the "counterreform" of the Social Security system from being voted into law.

The following article is translated from a special supplement to El Internacionalista (2 October 2004).

After years of absence from the political scene, the Mexican proletariat is back. On August 31, between 80,000 and 100,000 workers marched to the Zócalo, the main square of Mexico City, to protest the *counterreform* of the system of pensions of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS). They warned that with its announced "reform" of the retirement system, the government of Vicente Fox was seeking to privatize the IMSS. The "independent" unions filled Constitution Square to overflowing, while in the rest of the country tens of thousands of demonstrating workers went into the street in solidarity with the Social Security workers. Demonstrators chanted, "this struggle will end up as a national strike."

The next day there was a nationwide work stoppage in IMSS offices for the first time since the Institute was founded in 1943: *a day without the IMSS*. At the same time, offices of

the state electricity company in the central region (Luz y Fuerza del Centro, LyFC), were closed and tens of thousands of workers protested in the streets of the capital. The work stoppage followed an earlier confrontation on August 4, when several thousand IMSS unionists surrounded the Senate, attempting to prevent the "august" senators from voting in Fox's counterreform, an unheard of action in Mexican history. Fearing that the workers would storm the Congress during Fox's fourth annual report to the nation, a virtual state of siege was imposed on the center of the Federal District September 1. Workers rattled the kilometer-long metal barriers "producing a thrilling and deafening noise" (*La Jornada*) which drowned out the empty words of the president's phony report pleading for a "truce" in the social agitation.

On September 1, the ground shook under the feet of the parties of the Mexican bourgeoisie. Tactical differences vanished completely as the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party),

PAN (National Action Party) and PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) united to impose a police state in the center of the city. The legislative palace of San Lázaro looked like a besieged bunker, and the surrounding area was turned into a dead zone. It was surrounded by detachments of the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) in their gray uniforms with Plexiglas shields and riot batons made of ironwood; by more than a thousand soldiers in black uniforms without name tags; by *granaderos* (riot police) of the Public Safety Secretariat of the Federal District; and by an indeterminate number of agents of the Presidential High Command in plain clothes. In the rest of the country, it is reported that almost 10,000 members of the PFP and the Mexican Army were patrolling oil installations, hydroelectric plants, ports and airports.

What produced this eruption of panic in the ruling class, which paralyzed the capital during the celebration of the presidential rites? It was the spirit of struggle of thousands upon thousands of working people who see their most basic rights threatened. But these brave and combative workers lacked the key element: a revolutionary leadership. In the hands of the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats, supporters of the PRD and PRI, what could have unleashed a nationwide workers mobilization that could hold the government in check ended up having no immediate aftereffect. However, the long-term consequences of this show of proletarian power are yet to be seen.

The escalation of workers struggles is clearly related to the approach of the 2006 elections. On August 29, a quarter million supporters of the PRD gathered in the Zócalo. Andres Manuel López Obrador (often referred to by his initials, AMLO), the head of government of the Federal District and leading presidential hopeful of the PRD, made a speech opening his campaign, calling among his 20 "basic postulates" for "a new plan for the nation" which would be "an alternative capable of making use of globalization rather than merely enduring it"; which would not permit the privatization of the oil and electrical power industries (although he would allow, as he later said, private investment in both sectors); which would carry out the San Andrés Larráinzar Accords for autonomy for indigenous peoples, fight crime, etc. Various trade-union leaders who spoke from the platform on August 31 were there two days earlier as well, campaigning in favor of AMLO and his bourgeois party.

Important class battles are coming in Mexico. Despite the August 4 approval of the counterreform of the Social Security system by a Senate that was literally bussed in, the fight to defend pensions is not over. In order to come out winning, the exploited and oppressed need their own workers party, based on a revolutionary program, that fights for full independence of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie, its state and its parties. The bourgeoisie is deeply afraid that the working-class turmoil could spread to the key urban centers of the country and bring in its wake the toilers of the agricultural areas. An Indian and peasant rebellion in remote regions of Chiapas and guerrilla outbreaks in Oaxaca and Guerrero are one thing. But an uprising by the working people and poor of the city and countryside represents an incomparably greater threat to the ruling class.



Eduardo Verdugo/AP

President Vicente Fox meets with Mexico City mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador, leader of the Party of the Democratic Revolution, 4 September 2004.

To avoid this, the capitalist government and parties are getting ready to show an iron fist, while they attempt to divert the widespread discontent of the population in a direction that would guarantee their continued domination. After seven decades of corporatist government by the PRI and four years under Fox and his rightist PAN, the bourgeoisie is now getting ready for a new replacement option, the Party of the Democratic Revolution, whether under its historic leader, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, or under López Obrador. The opportunist left (not only the open reformists but also some centrists) is seeking to climb aboard, to be a caboose on the PRD train.

The Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International (LFI), in contrast, warns that the nationalist "popular front" around the PRD chains the workers to the class enemy. We stress that previous upsurges of workers struggles have foundered due to their illusions in the "democratization" of the PRI, as was the case with the "democratic tendencies" among the electrical workers and other industrial sectors during 1975-78, or because they were co-opted by the Cárdenas popular front, as occurred with the strike wave of 1987-1989.

We also point out that the bosses' war against the working people, in Mexico as well as in the imperialist countries such as the United States, is directly linked to the war and colonial occupation of Iraq. U.S. president Bush is counting on his friend Fox to impose social peace on the southern border of the empire and to supply the Mexican oil that is needed for his war machine. Revolutionaries who fight for the defeat of imperialism in Iraq also do so in the struggle against the capitalist war on the Mexican workers.

We insist that the only way to defeat the brutal offensive launched by the Mexican bourgeoisie against the living stan-

dards of the working people on behalf of its imperialist masters consists of forging a revolutionary workers party which takes up the internationalist banner of the genuine communism of Lenin and Trotsky.

The Battle over Social Security: Mobilize the Power of the Working Class!

For almost a year now, the Social Security workers have shown in their congresses, blockades, demonstrations and work stoppages that they are determined to fight against the bosses' broadside fired off by the Fox government. Despite the reiterated attempts by the president of the SNTSS (Social Security workers national union), Roberto Vega Galina, to reach an "agreement" with the director of the IMSS, Santiago Levy, the workers have shown such firmness that the bureaucrats, scared to death at the thought that they might lose their control over the workers (and the perks that come along with that), had to do an about face in order to keep up the appearance that they were fighting Fox's measures.

The special congress of the SNTSS called for last March 12 was preceded two days earlier by a huge demonstration of thousands of workers, above all from the union locals in the Valley of Mexico, against Levy's counterreform, and against the leadership of the SNTSS itself. Even though, as a member of the Technical Council of the IMSS, Vega Galina voted in October 2003 in favor of "reforming" the Retirement and Pensions System (RJP), at the union congress in March was had to give the official stamp of approval to the fight against the very same "reform." Since then, the bourgeois press has begun demonizing the SNTSS chief as a dangerous agitator, the same person they had previously praised as a labor statesman (that is, as a marionette having the confidence of the bosses).

The fundamental role of Vega Galina's *neo-charro*¹ bu-

¹ *Charro*: Mexican cowboy. After World War II, the Mexican government purged "reds" from the unions, replacing them with flunkies installed by the PRI regime. This marked a turning point in the growing state control of labor, creating a system of corporatist "unions" which acted as labor police for the bourgeoisie. One of the first and most famous of these leaders was Jesús Díaz de León, known as *El Charro* for his penchant of dressing up in Mexican cowboy outfits, installed as head of the railroad workers union. Since then, the system of corporatist unionism has been known as *charrismo*.

reaucracy has been to undermine the struggle, demobilizing the workers as much as possible and neutralizing their discontent. His "struggle tactics" consist of appealing to the bosses' courts to declare the changes voted by Congress in August "unconstitutional," at the same time threatening a strike which he does want to – and, in fact, cannot – lead. Nevertheless, preparations for a strike have been going forward and the question will be the subject of heated discussions at the SNTSS congress on October 11, shortly before the contract expires at midnight on the 15th.

A strike which goes beyond the issue of wages to seek to overturn the counterreform of the IMSS pension system would be a clash that would involve millions of working people in Mexico. The government has already announced that if this "reform" goes through in the Social Security Institute, it will shortly be extended to the ISSTE (the social security system

for government workers), PEMEX (the state oil company), the state electrical power companies (LyFC and CFE), public universities and the rest of the non-private sector of the economy. Under this "reform," the state would no longer pay one cent toward the workers' pensions, first for new employees and later, no doubt, for current employees as well. The working class as a whole will be affected by this class battle.



Jaime Puebla/AP

IMSS workers are not alone. Mass support for Social Security workers at 23 July 2004 march in Mexico City against anti-worker "reforms."

In a leaflet distributed to the IMSS workers on August 4, the Grupo Internacionalista called: "To Defeat the Privatization Plans of Fox, the PRI and PRD, Mobilize the Working Class, Paralyze the Capital!" and "For an Immediate Strike of Electrical, Oil and University Workers!" While thousands of workers are demanding a national strike and even a general strike against the capitalist government, we stressed that *a real general strike would be a brutal class confrontation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie*. That requires, therefore, the forging of a revolutionary class-struggle leadership of the proletariat.

It should be recalled that when the conservative French government of Prime Minister Alain Juppé and President Jacques Chirac attempted to impose a similar change in the pension system in 1995, the result was a wave of mass strikes and repeated demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of workers who shut down Paris (until the pro-capitalist bureaucrats "knew how to end a strike"). In Brazil last year, the effort by President Inácio Luiz Lula da Silva of the social-democratic Workers Party (PT) to

push through a similar measure on orders of the International Monetary Fund provoked a national strike of public workers lasting six weeks before it ended in defeat.

Facing the possibility of a strike by the workers of the Mexican Institute of Social Security therefore poses key questions for the movement: those of workers' *organization* and *leadership*. We pointed out in our article "IMSS Workers Under the Gun" (31 August 2004), that the SNTSS is a "semi-corporatist" union. The pseudo-unions of the CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) and CT (Congress of Labor), which are organically incorporated into the PRI, a bourgeois party, have held down the Mexican proletariat for decades in a strait-jacket. The CTM/CT leaders have acted directly as labor police for capital; their "unions" are the equivalent of the "Zubatov unions" (controlled by police agents like Zubatov) that the Bolsheviks combated under Lenin.

Up until the militant mobilizations of the IMSS workers in 1989, the SNTSS was a typical "union" of the corporatist system of the PRI-government. Its members were obligatory members of the PRI: they could be (and were) expelled from the organization and from their jobs through the exclusion clause for supporting any other party, above all a left-wing party. SNTSS leaders were part of the administration of the IMSS through a tri-partite commission (bosses, "unions" and government) and they imposed management discipline. But with the arrival of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari in the presidential offices at Los Pinos, coming after two six-year terms by PRI presidents who rammed through the privatizing policies of the IMF that are now known as "neoliberalism," the old scheme no longer served the national bosses and their imperialist overlords in Washington.

Together with his partners in the IMSS administration, the president of the SNTSS, "Doctor" Punzo Ganoa, worked out a new contract including drastic disciplinary measures against the workers, slashing vacations, etc. However, at the national congress of the union in October 1989 a majority voted against the management plan. The rebellious majority became a movement for union democracy, seized union offices by force, and took to the streets in huge mobilizations that lasted from October 13 to November 3. A poorly prepared "national work stoppage" on November 17 was a bust, and it was not until mid-December that "moderate" strikers were able to end the walkout.

Many of these "moderates," who sought an accord with Ganoa and the National Executive Committee of the SNTSS rather than running them out, later joined Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas PRD, a bourgeois nationalist party which was formed in the hectic year of 1989 (see the monograph by Patricia Ravelo and Sergio Sánchez, "Changes in Social Security and Union Resistance: the case of the Mexican Institute of Social Security," presented at the III Latin American Congress of Sociology of Labor, in May 2000 in Buenos Aires). In 1997, the SNTSS joined with the telephone workers and employees of the National University (UNAM) to become the largest union in the new National Workers Union (UNT), which criticized corporatism. However, some of its leaders, such as telephone workers union chief Francisco Hernández Suárez, Salinas' favorite unionist, supported massive privatization of state companies, partici-

pating in the juicy deals that came out of that.

From that time on, the SNTSS has had a semi-corporatist character, belonging both to the CT and to the UNT, with its leadership divided between members of the PRI (Vega Galina is a PRI deputy in Congress) and the PRD. Although party membership is now voluntary, the SNTSS still preserves much of the top-down "verticalism" that characterizes the CTM unions. Thus when the protests broke out against the "reform" of the IMSS, they were directed not only against Levy and the Institute's management, but also against the SNTSS leadership. Today there are a whole host of oppositionists inside the SNTSS who call for "union democracy." But a genuine struggle against the Fox "reforms" would have to do away with the corporatist shackles once and for all, establishing elected strike committees that can be recalled at any time by the union ranks.

At bottom every class struggle is a political struggle, and it requires a leadership that is up to the tasks posed. Leon Trotsky noted in his article, "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (1940), that trade-union democracy "presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state." Today, union federations such as the UNT, the FSM² and others declare themselves "independent" of the PRI. However, their leaderships not only *do not* fight for class independence of the proletariat, they instead serve as a vehicle for the bourgeoisie to shackle the working people. In the famous phrase coined by Daniel De Leon and taken up by Lenin, the union bureaucrats are the real "agents of the bourgeoisie in the workers movement" and "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class."

The Left and the IMSS: The Question of the Popular Front

Mexico is a country of belated capitalist development which has a 2,000-mile long land border with the greatest imperialist power in the world, the United States. The result of this is the fact that the national bourgeoisie is inherently weak and is bound by a thousand ties to its imperialist masters. Its innate weakness is manifested in the fact that, although it has already gone through three bourgeois revolutions (the Independence revolution of 1810-1821, the War of Reform of 1857-1860 and the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917), democratic tasks continue to be unfulfilled. The answer to this dilemma is not, as many fake leftists claim, to undertake a new edition of the uprising of Emiliano Zapata. Instead of a neo-Zapatismo that is condemned to fail, we Trotskyists insist that in the imperialist epoch, the accomplishment of the classic tasks of the bourgeois revolution, such as national liberation and agrarian revolution, is only possible through the taking of power by the working class, which will be forced to pass over to socialist tasks and to extend the revolutionary internationally in order to ensure its own survival.

It has been demonstrated over and over that the Mexican bourgeoisie is incapable of guaranteeing fundamental demo-

² Frente Sindical Mexicano (Mexican Union Front), led by the SME electrical workers union on a nationalist program.

cratic rights. During the UNAM strike of 1999-2000, the PRI, PAN and PRD united in an unholy alliance in order to deny the children of the exploited the democratic right to an education. Access to health care is also a basic democratic right, one which, moreover, is consecrated in the Constitution of 1917. Nevertheless, the truth is that quality health care is a privilege of those who can pay for it. From 1986 to 2000, the number of people enrolled in the IMSS doubled (from 13 million workers to 26 million) while the government resources provided to it were cut by 50 percent. The introduction of the "afores" (private managers of retirement funds) after 1995 drained off 40 billion pesos (roughly US\$4 billion) from the Institute's budget, which was largely responsible for its current financial crisis.

With the "reforms" that they want to foist on the IMSS – and soon after, the ISSSTE – the situation can only get worse. In the face of this, the classic response of the reformists consists of appealing to a supposedly "progressive" or "anti-imperialist" sector of the national bourgeoisie to support the working people in their struggle against an attack dictated by the international financial bodies. Because the reforms to the public health system in Mexico were dictated expressly by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the reformists and nationalists denounce Fox for "selling out the *patria*" (fatherland) and they look around for another, "patriotic" bourgeois politician to defend the "national patrimony." Proletarian revolutionaries, on the other hand, draw the opposite conclusion: the Mexican bourgeoisie as a whole are lackey-like accomplices of the imperialist financial institutions, which is why what's needed is international socialist revolution.

The fight against the bourgeois onslaught cannot be waged hand in hand with a section of those who launched the attack. For the IMSS workers, the subordination of the working class to the bourgeois PRD, and to some sectors of the PRI, is an obstacle to a successful struggle against the attempt to destroy the pension and retirement system. This means, in the first place, that what is necessary is to *break with the nationalist popular front* around the PRD. The program of the Grupo Internacionalista is based on the Trotskyist perspective of permanent revolution. Formulated by Leon Trotsky after the Russian Revolution of 1905, concretized in the October Revolution of 1917 and later generalized to countries of belated capitalist development, this perspective holds that the fundamental democratic tasks of the bourgeois revolution in semicolonial countries like Mexico can only be resolved if they are indissolubly bound up with the fight for workers revolution and its international extension.

On the other hand, various workers organizations and left groups seek to dissolve the struggle of the IMSS workers into the framework of class collaboration. Proclaiming the need for the broadest "unity," it seeks to enroll the workers in one or another nationalist and bourgeois "front." The SME (electrical



Popular front vs. the students. Mexico City granaderos (riot police) arrest UNAM student strikers, 4 August 1999.

workers) bureaucrats, for example, justify their popular-front alliance with the PRD – and even the PRI "dinosaur" Bartlett – in the National Front Against Privatization of the Electrical Industry by saying that all that matters is "adding forces together." But what kind of "sum" results from an "alliance" with the class enemy? In his article, "Spain: Last Warning," Trotsky answers:

"The theoreticians of the Popular Front do not essentially go beyond the first rule of arithmetic, that is, addition.... However, arithmetic alone does not suffice here. One needs as well at least mechanics. The law of the parallelogram of forces applies to politics as well. In such a parallelogram, we know that the resultant is shorter, the more component forces diverge from each other. When political allies tend to pull in opposite directions, the resultant prove equal to zero."

Today, various prophets of the popular front want to convert working-class discontent into votes for the PRD and López Obrador. It's no accident that signs of the Telephone Workers Union and the UNT in the August 31 demonstration simply called for putting a stop to the onslaught against Social Security and the "plot" against AMLO. On September 1 at the demonstration outside San Lázaro during Fox's address to Congress, different SNTSS bureaucrats sent greetings from the platform to the "comrade deputies" who were supposedly fighting for the "interests of the people," explicitly referring to the PRD parliamentary group. Nothing could be further from reality.

On many occasions, the PRD has revealed its true nature as a mortal enemy of the working people. PRD governments of Mexico City, from the "Engineer" Cárdenas and his successor Rosario Robles to López Obrador, have time and again unleashed their police thugs against striking students, the homeless and union mobilizations. The Social Security workers must know this well: on 9 October 2003, at the request of Vega Galina, riot cops of the capital police burst into the offices of the SNTSS in Tlalpan to dislodge 52 dissident delegates. More

recently, on August 4, it was Marcel Ebrard, head of the Secretariat of Public Safety (SSP) of the Federal District (i.e., the police chief of Mexico City) who conducted the senators into the “Big House of Xicoténcatl” in passenger buses, ordering his granaderos to savagely beat the demonstrating workers who had surrounded the seat of the Senate, in order to vote for the “reform” of the IMSS. Again on September 1, the virtual state of siege in the historic center of the capital was a joint operation of Fox’s PFP and López Obrador’s SSP.

If Trotsky Were Alive, He Wouldn’t Be with Those Pseudo-Trotskyists

The Militante group, which has the nerve to call itself “Marxist” (and even “Trotskyist”), noted in an article on the mobilization of the Social Security workers on August 4:

“Thousands of workers – not just the IMSS – demonstrated in an electrified atmosphere for more than ten hours, chanting slogans like ‘Not one vote for the PRI and the PAN!’ and a long and insistent ‘PRD! PRD! PRD!’; on the one hand they were trying to prevent the Senate session, while on the other hand they were demonstrating a certain hope in the legislative body.”

Far from fighting against the PRD, Militante claims to be a “Marxist” tendency within it, and instead of combating workers’ illusions in this capitalist party, they stoke them! Elsewhere in the same article, they complain that the PRD is only “verbally” on the side of the working people, and it’s necessary to “proceed to practice what they preach.” But to what purpose? They call on the PRD leaders to fight:

“to bring together the movement of the IMSS, the ISSSTE, the CNTE [dissident teachers] and the SME, along with the whole of the powerful UNT which has 300 national unions representing some 1.5 million workers. This would be the simplest and most audacious way of bringing to a halt the attack on López Obrador seeking to remove his parliamentary immunity.”

Thus, rather than defending the class interests of the working people, Militante seeks to subordinate them to the defense of the capitalist politician who has his offices in City Hall.

While the Militante group declares itself to be part and parcel of the bourgeois PRD, there are other groups which claim to be Trotskyist and which (mildly) criticize the PRD, even as it trails along in the wake of the popular front. Whatever the political issue, the Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS – Socialist Workers League) is always ready with the proposal to create another front, conference, congress or some other organizational mechanism to sidle up to the sectors led by the pro-capitalist bureaucrats. In the pages of their paper, *Estrategia Obrera*, one can occasionally find, in small type at the end or buried in the middle of an article, a ritual mention of a revolutionary workers party. But its operational policy is “frontism,” a policy which ties it to the popular front. It has inherited this tailist “method” from its progenitor, the Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno.

As concerns the struggle of the Social Security workers, the LTS backs *Hoja Obrera*, which says that “we are part of the National Front of Active and Retired Workers of the IMSS”

(*Hoja Obrera* No. 12, 14 August). This Front, in turn, calls to “demand from the parliamentary fraction of the PRD and PT that they appeal the constitutional controversy” around the IMSS “reform.” Speaking with Social Security workers on August 4, the Grupo Internacionalista stressed that the PRD’s supposed “opposition” to the reform is a mere façade. The PRD deputies were the first to shout about the need for a “reform” of the IMSS, we pointed out, and now they praise Vega Galina for having put forward a “proposal” (at the bargaining table) “for the workers to pay up to 15 percent of their salary into the pension fund and to raise the retirement age to 65 years.” We also emphasized in our leaflet for August 31:

“The calls on Vega Galina to quit the PRI and the chant of ‘Not one vote for the PRI! Not one vote for the PAN!’ reflects the disdain for the bourgeois parties who approved in Congress Fox’s package of reforms. However, these slogans implicitly favor the bourgeois PRD, which supposedly opposed enactment of the counterreforms.”

The policy of the LTS is quite different. On its web site, *Hoja Obrera* No. 11 (7 August) says, referring to Vega Galina: “Many chanted that he should resign from the PRI.” But in the actual leaflet that was distributed to the Social Security workers it says something different: “Many of us chanted for him to quit the PRI, that the workers’ ranks were calling on him to do so.” Evidently, the LTS is quite conscious of its capitulation to the PRD and is trying to apply a little cyber-makeup to hide it.

Meanwhile, the LTS is participating in the “Committee to Promote National Unity Against Neoliberalism,” which was resuscitated in the demonstrations around the Latin American summit meeting in Guadalajara this past May. Even though the government wants to write off the groups promoting this outfit as “front groups” of the Revolutionary People’s Army (EPR) and other guerrilla-type groups, in reality this front serves to channel youth into the bourgeois PRD. In their Manifesto of Guadalajara, these paladins of national unity proclaim: “The fatherland must not be sold out! And in a curious article in *Estrategia Obrera* (No. 39) on “What Kind of Nation Do the Workers Need?” the LTS informs us:

“In the fronts and workers and popular organizations, such as the Committee to Promote National Unity Against Neoliberalism, an important discussion is going on concerning what Plan for a Nation it is necessary to fight for.”

Clearly this is directly linked to López Obrador’s August 29 speech.

As shown in this case, the inveterate “frontism” of the LTS leads it to buy into the popular front programmatically. Thus, for example, in *Estrategia Obrera* No. 18, it calls for “Defend the Federal Labor Law and the [Union] Contracts!” The call to defend “our collective contract” also comes up in the propaganda of *Hoja Obrera* and the National Front of IMSS Workers. While the bureaucrats consider the union contract to be theirs, revolutionaries point out that any contract with management is no more than a truce in the class struggle (and in many cases it represents a defeat). It is one thing to oppose Fox’s plans for pro-management “reforms” to the labor laws, but defending the PRI’s Federal Labor Law is defending the system of corporatist control of the Mexican working class by the capitalist government!



Grupo Internacionalista in UNAM student march, October 1999.

If *Militante* is an integral part of the PRD popular front and the LTS tags along one step behind through the various fronts in which it participates, one group that claims to oppose class collaboration is the Grupo Espartaquista de México (GEM). Before carrying out a political purge in 1996, in which it expelled young comrades who went on to form the Grupo Internacionalista, the GEM for a decade held that there was a popular front around the bourgeois PRD, which included left groups and the “independent” unions. However, in 1997, just when the PRD won the election for head of the Federal District government, installing Cárdenas as Mexico City mayor, the GEM decided that there is not, has not been and cannot be a popular front in Mexico. With its turn toward abstention from the class struggle, by denying the existence of a popular front, the GEM relieved itself of the need to fight against the current leaderships of the workers movement who tie the working people to a sector of the bourgeoisie.

In order to provide a “theoretical” justification for their “discovery,” the GEM and the international tendency it is part of, the International Communist League (ICL), now hold that a popular front is only possible as a coalition between a bourgeois party and a mass reformist workers party – and since in Mexico there is no mass workers party, well then... It should be remarked in passing that its new definition negates what Trotsky wrote on innumerable occasions in the 1930s, where he spoke of popular fronts in India, China and other semi-colonial countries that lacked big workers parties. According to the ICL and the GEM, Mexican workers are so bewitched by *nationalism* that they haven’t even been able to form a workers party (a necessary step in order to later form a popular front that would firmly tie them to the bourgeoisie).

This purely *idealist* and un-Marxist explanation is part of its revisionist outlook which sees in a “qualitative regression” in working-class consciousness the origin of the defeats of the proletariat. According to them, Trotsky’s statement that the question of revolutionary leadership is the key to the future of humanity has been surpassed by history. Today, as is the case with all

opportunists, the GEM and the ICL blame the workers themselves. Let us point out in passing that the ICL uses the same reasoning to deny that there is any mass resistance by Iraqi working people to the colonial occupation, claiming that there is nothing but a bunch of retrograde Islamic fundamentalists and “discredited nationalists” fighting against the U.S. imperialist troops. Borrowing the accusations against the revolutionaries coming from those that Lenin called “social patriots,” the ICL accuses the Grupo Internacionalista/League for the Fourth International of “playing the card of anti-Americanism,” because we call to fight for the defeat of imperialism in Iraq and around the world.

Just as they were revising their line on the popular front, the GEM and the ICL also decreed that the corporatist “unions” in Mexico are genuine workers organizations. In doing so, they put an equal sign between the “independent” unions, which seek to tie the workers to the PRD, and the pseudo-unions of the CTM,

the CROC (Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Federation) and the CT, which are an organic part of the PRI, forming the “workers sector” of what used to be the state party and which continues to control a large part of the country through the state governments. The Grupo Internacionalista and the League for the Fourth International have insisted, as did the GEM and ICL for a whole decade before their abrupt turn to the right, that the CTM and the other corporatist federations are organs of management control which serve as professional scabs.

In a recent leaflet (August 2004) on the IMSS workers struggle, the GEM noted that the CTM and CT leaders “not only endorsed the proposal to dismantle the pensions, but they even called to break the national work stoppage proposed by the SNTSS, the UNT and the SME.” What a surprise! From the railroad workers and teachers mobilizations of the 1950s, to the electrical workers’ struggles in the ’70s, and the struggles of the women workers in the maquiladoras in the ’90s, *all the major struggles of the Mexican proletariat have been directed against the corporatist unions which constituted the first line of defense of PRI rule.* As Trotsky explained in his essay, “Neither a Workers nor a Bourgeois State?” (November 1937):

“The character of a workers’ organization such as a trade union is determined by its relation to the distribution of national income. The fact that Green and Company [the leaders of the American Federation of Labor] defend private property in the means of production characterizes them as bourgeois. Should these gentlemen in addition defend the income of the bourgeoisie from attacks on the part of the workers; should they conduct a struggle against strikes, against the raising of wages, against help to the unemployed; then we would have an organization of scabs, and not a trade union.”

We have here a precise definition of the role of the CTM & Co.

In Mexico today, the corporatist system of the PRI which served the “national” bourgeoisie and Yankee imperialism for seven decades as a mechanism for iron social control of the proletariat is in tatters. The illusions in a “democratic transi-

tion" embodied in the presidency of Vicente Fox have vanished. The PRI is girding to attempt a comeback under the "dinosaur" Roberto Madrazo, whose minions in Congress voted for the "reform" of the IMSS retirement system, putting on the PAN the responsibility for the dirty work that they would themselves have to carry out once back in power. In order to divert the mounting social struggle, bourgeois sectors are looking for an alternative solution, which may be represented by the PRD presidential candidacy of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, or some other candidate of the party of the Aztec sun.

This does not represent a solution for the working class. Quite the contrary, if the popular front takes office, as in Brazil it will be to wage the bosses' war against the working class which the other bourgeois parties have hesitated to carry through to the end out of fear of a social earthquake. Under these circumstances, the struggle against the PRD and the fight to forge a revolutionary workers party are not secondary questions, but rather the core of the battle over the IMSS. The swindlers who pass themselves off as Trotskyists while trying to peddle popular-front politics, as well as the "CTM socialists" who deny that there even is a popular front, are an obstacle to this struggle.

Against the misleaders of the working class and their left-wing acolytes, the Grupo Internacionalista is fighting to resolve the crisis of proletarian leadership through building a revolutionary workers party in Mexico, which would be part of a democratic-centralist Fourth International that fights tooth and nail for international socialist revolution. ■

Imperial Coronation...

continued from page 9

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International defend the remaining bureaucratically deformed workers states (North Korea, Cuba, China, Vietnam), as we stood for defense of the Soviet Union and East Europe, while calling for political revolution to oust the Stalinist leaders whose pipe dreams of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism went up in smoke. The IG/LFI defend semi-colonial countries such as Iraq and Iran under attack by imperialism, and uphold their right to obtain any weapons they need to fight off U.S. imperialism, whose vast destructive power and kill-crazed rulers constitute the greatest threat to the future of mankind. The Trotskyists call to defeat the bosses war, abroad and "at home," with powerful working-class struggle.

From the war-ravaged Near East to Europe and the United States – as well as in Asia, hard-hit by a tsunami whose devastation was man-made, and Latin America, where the working masses have endured more than two decades of strangulation by rulers doing the bidding of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Wall Street banks – the raw material for explosive class struggles against imperialism and its puppets is abundant. The crisis of proletarian leadership is the decisive factor. A few thousand of Bush's black-clad riot cops can goose-step up Pennsylvania Avenue and pepper spray unarmed youths, but they can't hold back a tidal wave of struggle by a class-conscious working class, at the head of all the oppressed, led by a Bolshevik vanguard party. ■

Rape of Falluja...

continued from page 7

troops from Iraq, but for an "intelligent" withdrawal over six months and their replacement by European imperialist troops. Whether they have U.S. flags on their uniforms or NATO shoulder patches or United Nations blue helmets, it would still be a colonial occupation, and the Iraqis would still be right to try to drive them out. In this war, class-conscious workers the world over have a side: **with the Iraqi people against the imperialist attackers and their colonial occupation.** With Lenin and Trotsky, the League for the Fourth International holds that in an imperialist war on a semi-colonial or colonial country, it is a matter of **elementary class principle to stand for defense of Iraq, and Afghanistan, and all the targets of U.S. and British imperialism, and to fight for the defeat of the imperialists.**

The current war is the product not of a president or a policy or a particular party, but of a system which has produced an endless string of wars over the last century, from the Spanish-American War to the First World War to the Second World War to the Korean War in the 1950s to the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and the Vietnam War in the '60s, to the Afghanistan War and the contra war in Central America in the '80s, to two wars against Yugoslavia in the '90s (in 1995 over Bosnia and in 1999 over Kosovo) to the Afghanistan War in 2001 and the Iraq War in 2003, both of which are continuing. That system is imperialism, which as Lenin pointed out is the stage of capitalism when it has outgrown national boundaries and spreads its tentacles throughout the world, sucking surplus value out of the sweat and toil of impoverished workers from El Salvador to the Philippines, controlling sources of raw materials from Brazil to Nigeria to the Near East. The present war is not about Saddam Hussein, the former U.S. running dog who slipped the leash, who started out killing Iraqi communists by the hundreds with lists supplied by the CIA, and then used chemical weapons furnished by the U.S. to prevent the Iranians from reaching the Saudi oil fields. The war is not about "weapons of mass destruction" which Hussein didn't have, as was clear at the time, and which the U.S. has in abundance and has used with abandon.

Falluja is ground zero of the U.S. war for imperialist domination of the planet. It will not be stopped simply by denouncing the atrocities and having a bigger and better antiwar movement. Peace parades down Fifth Avenue or circling Madison Square Garden won't stop the Special Forces and Marine expeditionary forces. Bolsheviks are not pacifists, and call instead for **class war against the imperialist war.** The imperialists have to be defeated, on the battlefield in Iraq and elsewhere, above all through the mobilization of the social force that has the power to sweep away imperialism and bring the capitalist machinery of exploitation and oppression to a grinding halt. That force is the international working class, and the League for the Fourth International has fought to mobilize the power of the proletariat since the beginning of the war. We have called for and fought for **workers boycotts of military cargos**, concretely among rail and dock workers in Europe and among West Coast longshoremen in the United States, and for

Sue Kellogg



Internationalist Group's red banners on August 29 counterposed to pro-Democratic Party politics of "antiwar" march. Liberals and reformists call for new U.S. foreign policy, Trotskyists fight to defeat U.S. imperialism.

workers strikes against the war. Already in Europe in the lead-up to the attack on Iraq, train drivers in Scotland refused to move munitions trains while Italian rail workers and antiwar groups blocked railroad tracks to block trains carrying jeeps, tanks, helicopters and other heavy equipment bound for the Persian Gulf. As the war drags on and casualties mount, the possibilities of working-class action against the imperialist slaughter will rise sharply.

In the U.S., when shippers of war goods were picketed in the port of Oakland, California, police savagely attacked demonstrators, firing on them with "non-lethal" ammunition, injuring half a dozen longshoremen and arresting 25. The charges against them were dropped a year later. Last March 20, the ILWU itself held a token work stoppage protesting the war. What's necessary is to go beyond such gestures to a knock-down, drag-out fight. It's necessary to drive home the lesson that *you can't fight Bush with Democrats*. Moreover, any capitalist party is part of the

imperialist system, whether it's the red-white-and-blue Greens (who only ran in "safe" states where they wouldn't threaten the vote for Kerry), or oil millionaire Nader, who ran on the ticket of the right-wing Reform Party, went after so-called "illegal aliens" and vituperated against the "totalitarian" Chinese deformed workers state. It is necessary to hammer home that what's needed is to *build a revolutionary workers party*, a party that shows how the war on Iraq is a war on working people, blacks, Latinos and immigrants "at home," and which puts forward a program to sweep away the capitalist system that breeds war, poverty and racism. Such a party must be what Lenin called a *tribune of the people*, that doesn't just fight over economic issues but takes up the cause of the oppressed over every abuse and every attack.

The rape of Falluja must be avenged by Iraqis fighting to drive out the imperialist invaders and by the workers of the world, fighting to defeat the bosses' war that targets all the exploited and oppressed. ■

The Internationalist

Annual subscription US\$10 for five issues



**A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism for the
Reforging of the Fourth International**

Publication of the Internationalist Group

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Apt.# _____ Tel.(____) _____

City _____ State/Province _____

PostalCode/Zip _____ Country _____

Make checks/money orders payable to Mundial Publications
and mail to:

Mundial Publications
Box 3321, Church Street Station
New York, NY 10008 U.S.A.

Write the Internationalist Group at above address, or contact: Tel
(212) 460-0983 Fax (212) 614-8711 E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

To Combat Lula's Mega Popular Front and Its IMF-Dictated Anti-Worker Reforms...

We Don't Need a Social-Democratic "New Party" of Disillusioned *Lulistas*

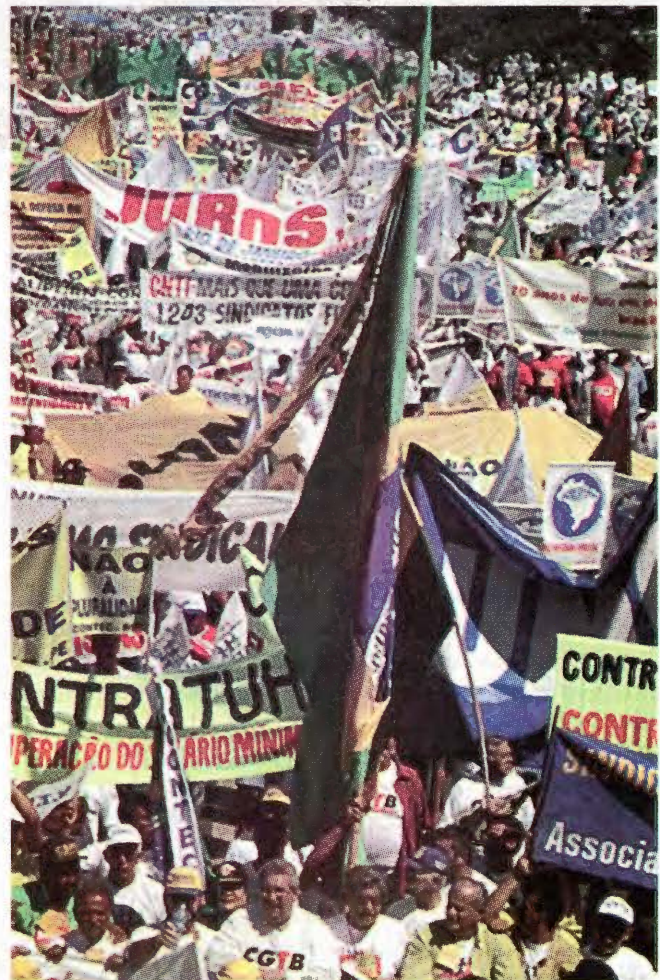
What's Needed Is to Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The following article is translated from *Vanguarda Operária* No. 8 (January-February 2005), published by our comrades of the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil*.

From the moment Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva moved into the presidential office in Brasília, there has been great disappointment in the Brazilian working class, and now its anger is brewing. A period of working-class struggle against the government of Lula's Workers Party (PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores) is coming, in which resolving the crisis of proletarian leadership will be decisive. Considered by millions of workers at the time of the 2002 elections as "one of us," the "comrade president" has loyally served his capitalist and imperialist masters rather than the poor and hungry who voted him into office. He carried out to the letter the anti-worker programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This conduct, which many workers see as a betrayal, is inherent in the nature of a popular front, a bourgeois class-collaborationist alliance which unites reformist and centrist workers' organizations and political parties to the bourgeois parties and politicians. In this way they chain the working people to their class enemy. It was precisely because of his commitment to the ruling class, and due to the deepening economic crisis spreading through a number of countries of Latin America, that the election of Lula was allowed after his fourth campaign for the presidency.

The opportunist left as a whole gave its support to the PT – whether enthusiastic, critical or backhanded – which it had always done going back to the "original PT," despite its alliance with the right-wing Liberal Party (PL) of Lula's vice president, José Alencar. Fighting against the popular-front electoral current, the *Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil* (LQB – Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil) warned: "The owners of Brazil have conferred on Lula the task of getting the working masses to swallow the anti-working-class 'reforms' that his rightist predecessors were unable to foist on them" ("Brazil: Lula Government, Putting Out Fires for the IMF," *The Internationalist* No. 18, May-June 2004). Once installed in the Palácio do Planalto in the capital, the new president broadened his coalition to include the PFL¹ of the

¹ Liberal Front Party, the traditional representative of Brazil's *fazendeiros* (large landowners) and other ultra-reactionaries.



Iano Andrade/AP

Workers protest in Brasília, 25 March 2004, against the anti-worker reforms of the Lula government.

regional *cacique* (chief, or political boss) Antônio Carlos Magalhães and political figures in the PMDB², such as ex-presi-

² Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement, which was set up as a pseudo-opposition under the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985.

Eraldo Peres/AP



As part of its "Red April" campaign, militants of the landless peasants movement (MST) enter the Brasília Cathedral for a service honoring the 19 peasants murdered in Eldorado dos Carajás in 1996.

dents Itamar Franco and José Sarney. The former privatized the National Steel Company (CSN), and the latter authorized the army's invasion of the CSN, killing three workers, in the historic strike of 1988. Lula also embraced cronies of the military dictators such as Delfim Neto and Paulo Maluf. With this "mega popular front," Lula surrounded himself with a broad bourgeois majority, including in Congress, in order to discipline the left wing of his own party, and mainly as a guarantee against the increasingly combative struggles of the workers.

After a year and a half in office, the popularity of the "comrade president" has plunged in the opinion polls. In the skyscrapers of the Bovespa (stock market) and the Fiesp (industrialists' association) in the commercial center of São Paulo, whose state is considered "the locomotive of Brazil," the bankers and manufacturers celebrate with champagne the profits which continue climbing into the clouds, despite the nervousness they felt before the new government led by the PT took office. But in the working-class neighborhoods of the ABC industrial area outside São Paulo, there is growing frustration due to the fall in their wages and rising unemployment. The welfare assistance programs announced by the new president in January 2003 such as the "Zero Hunger" campaign either ended up as a dead letter, or, in the case of the "School Basket," consisted of an absurdly small handout of food to starving families. For many, the verdict was unsparing: their situation had not improved, on the contrary, it had gotten worse compared to the previous period under the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

During the first quarter of 2004, the public sector (federal, state and municipal governments and state-owned companies) achieved a record primary budget surplus of around R\$20 billion (roughly US\$7.5 billion), an amount exceeding the goal of R\$14.5 billion set by the IMF. At the same time, the unemployment rate

has been rising and reached a record high of 20.5 percent in the São Paulo metropolitan region. There is a close relation between these two figures: Along with increasing unemployment, the Brazilian government managed to "raise" the gross internal product by some 5.4 percent, dedicating this to paying off the interest on the foreign debt through brutal cutbacks in social programs and high bank interest rates (over 16 percent) which holds down production. The little economic growth that there has been is due to the low level of international interest rates (around 1 percent in New York), and now these rates are rising once again, threatening to produce absolute stagnation. As always, it is the working people who pay the bosses' debts.

But since the capitalist system continues to generate poverty, the class struggle doesn't stop. In the face of the ridiculous balance sheet of agrarian re-

form (with more than 4.5 landless families in Brazil, the government promised to settle some 400,000 on their own land by 2006, but in 2003 it only managed to provide land for 36,000 families and for a mere 11,000 in the first half of 2004), a new wave of occupations of idle rural lands has arisen. Amid the commemorations of the 19 peasants murdered at El Dorado dos Carajás in 1996, the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) launched its "Red April" campaign with 109 land invasions, the largest number since 1995. In the Pontal do Paranapanema region of São Paulo state, there have been clashes between the peasants and *jagunços* (private armies of rent-a-thugs) hired by the landowners, which could turn into open warfare at any moment. In the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, the federal highway police is threatening to arrest peasants camped out along Route 386. Yet Pedro Stédile, leader of the MST, describes his movement as conservative, saying that "we only want the government to apply the constitution," that he is only try to get Lula to act, and that a spark could set the Brazilian countryside aflame.

Agitation is also growing among the industrial proletariat. Lula was booed by workers at Mercedes Benz in his former bastion, where he came from, São Bernardo do Campo, when he called them "privileged" because they paid taxes with their wages. A metal worker protested: "Enough promises, we want actions. We're tired of being taken for a ride" (*O Repórter do ABC*, 27 April). A few days later, workers blocked the superhighway at Anchieta. On May Day, the union federations brought 2 million people into the streets of São Paulo – 800,000 at the event organized by the pro-government left-wing *pelegos* (popular name for union chiefs who discipline the workers for the government, as in the days of the dictatorship) of the CUT, and 1.2 million at the event held by the right-wing *pelegos* of Força Sindical – which is equal to the number of unemployed in the São Paulo metropolitan region. In the demonstration, the

pelegos handed out popcorn and lollypops paid for by the Bovespa bosses and the state. However, the ridiculous “raise” in the minimum wage to R\$260 a month (a little under US\$100, or about 3 dollars a day), signed into law by Lula on the eve of the workers holiday, was greeted with booing and deafening shouts at the demonstrations. And on May 10, federal public employees went on strike for the second time in one year, demanding an emergency wage hike of 50 percent (to make up for the losses in buying power since 1995, the increase would have to be more than 125 percent).

After imposing the pension “reform” last year, after a month-long strike by the federal employees, now Lula’s government is preparing to impose his labor and university “reforms.” The former strengthens the power of the union federation tops, so that they can get rid of the right for union assemblies to vote on collective bargaining contracts, at the same time that it “regulates” (that is, limits) the right to strike. In exchange for the abolition of the hated “union tax,” a measure inherited from the corporatist regime of Getúlio Vargas and the military dictatorship which puts the unions under the financial control of the state, it imposes heavy “taxes” on the labor federations of up to 13 percent of wages. Already the university reform is preparing the way for privatization of public higher education by raising student fees and concentrating public investment in private institutions. As in the case of the pension counter-reform, this program is closely following the dictates of imperialist financial institutions (IMF, World Bank) with the aim of raising profit rates by cutting public expenses dedicated to education, health and other “unprofitable” sectors.

Meanwhile, Lula is serving as a sheriff for Yankee imperialism to keep order in Latin America. In October 2003, he joined with the Argentine government of Néstor Kirchner in a failed mission in Bolivia attempting to save the government of the hated mass murderer Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada. Then in mid-2004, a contingent of 1,800 Brazilian military personnel was sent to Haiti, taking the place of U.S. occupation troops which had backed the coup d’état and toppled Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. U.S. forces are needed to shore up the colonial occupation in Iraq in the face of a rebellion there, so Brazil promptly comes to the aid of the imperialists bogged down by their conquests. Brazilian general Heleno Pereira, commander of the United Nations “stabilization” force, predicted that he might have to unleash “energetic action” against “one or another demonstration that goes beyond the bounds of normality” (BBC, 31 May 2004).

Haiti was the only country in the Americas where a slave revolution abolished slavery, including defeating the then-powerful France of Napoleon Bonaparte. This took place at the same time as Dom João VI, the Portuguese king fleeing his homeland, found refuge in Brazil. Thus Brazil, the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery (in 1888), with the largest black population



Eraldo Peres/AP

Popular Front Breaks Strikes

President Lula wraps himself in the Brazilian flag as he attacks the workers. Above: federal employees struck for more than a month against pension “reforms” dictated by the International Monetary Fund.



Paulo Fridman/Polaris

in the world outside of Nigeria, intends to “stabilize” the first black republic on the continent, the birthplace of the heroic slave revolutionary Toussaint Louverture, placing it under the military boot on behalf of Washington. In exchange, Lula is seeking the support of Bush in obtaining a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for Brazil.

In the face of the across-the-board offensive of the Lula government against the workers, peasants, students and other oppressed sectors, there is no lack of signs of rebellion and attempts at struggle. What is needed above all is a revolutionary leadership. Yet almost the entire left and even the supposed “far left” subordinated itself to the PT-led popular front. In the October 2002 elections, “socialists” and even “communists” chanted “Lula’s there,” while the head of the PT was campaigning with the “king of the T-shirts,” José de Alencar. After the first-round elimination of its candidate, José Maria de Almeida, the fake Trotskyist PSTU (Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado – United Socialist Workers Party)³, based on the fact that “the workers believe in Lula,” declared that it “will join with the work-

³ The PSTU is the mainstay of the International Workers League (IIT, according to its initials in Spanish and Portuguese), followers of the political line of the late Nahuel Moreno.



The four parliamentary stars of the new social-democratic party, the PSOL, at its founding conference in June 2004. From the left: Senator Heloísa Helena and the deputies João Fontes, João Batista Oliveira (Babá) and Luciana Genro.

ing class and will help in calling to vote for Lula and electing him.” Although some groups hesitated to give an explicit endorsement of Lula, as they had done in past elections when the PT ran in popular fronts with some bourgeois allies who were less rightist, after the vote they sought to push the new government to the left, seeking to take advantage of the “expectations” of the masses motivated by the election of Lula (the position of the PSTU) or of the “revolutionary tendencies of the masses” (position of the Partido Causa Operária [PCO]⁴).

Only the LQB insisted on the position of authentic Trotskyism, of fighting for the revolutionary political independence of the working class, by refusing, as a matter of class principle, to vote for any candidate or party of a popular front, which is a bourgeois political formation. (See the LQB declaration, “For Proletarian Opposition to the Popular Front!” *The Internationalist* No. 14, September-October 2002.) We warned that, far from governing in favor of the workers and the poor, Lula was installed in the presidency to act as a fireman and to enact the anti-worker measures that his predecessors (from Collor to Itamar Franco and Fernando Henrique Cardoso) were unable to push through in the face of the resistance of the workers. However, when Lula began doing exactly what we said beforehand he would do, a part of the supposed PT “radicals” went into rebellion. In the vote on the Pension Reform, Senator Heloísa Helena (from the state of Alagoas) and the deputies João Batista Oliveira, known as “Babá” (Pará), Luciana Genro (Rio Grande do Sul) and João Fontes (Seará) refused to follow the line of the leadership, leading to their expulsion from the PT in December 2003.

Now the four expelled parliamentarians formed the Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (PSOL), which was formally founded in a meeting in Brasília on June 5-6. From August 2003 up to the

⁴ The PCO is part of a lash-up to “refound the Fourth International,” initiated by the Argentine Partido Obrero led by Jorge Altamira.

founding of the PSOL, the dominant political debate in the left has been over the “new party” being formed. Everyone wanted to exploit the popularity of the expelled, and to sidle up to the disillusioned, disappointed Lulistas. There were different methods: when the four refused to join with the PSTU, the latter changed its call for a new left party to add the qualifier “socialist.” However, it did so in the framework of the Brazil Social Forum, a mini popular front which even includes sectors of the church. At bottom, the proposition was the same: to return to the “original PT.” The pseudo-Trotskyist tendency O Trabalho (Labor)⁵ made this explicit with its slogan “For the Redemption of the PT,” in its bulletin, *PT das origens*. In announcing the PSOL, its spokesman emphasized: “Like the PT (in 1980), the PSOL was born under the watchword of ‘fight the bourgeoisie’ and in favor of a massive agrarian reform, according to Babá” (*Folha de São Paulo*, 7 June 2004). Yet despite its rhetoric against the bourgeoisie, the PT never went beyond the limits of social democ-

racy, seeking to reform (rather than overthrowing) capitalism. Enrolling the CST⁶ and MTL⁷, currents which split to the right from the PSTU in earlier years, the PSOL is pushing to gather the 438,000 signatures necessary to launch Heloísa Helena as candidate for president in 2006.

This new party is, without any doubt, another social-democratic party, positioning itself slightly to the left of the PT, and is governed by the rules of the parliamentary game of the bourgeoisie. It is precisely this kind of “party of an old type,” electoralist to the core, that the Brazilian working class *does not need*. Trained in the struggle for influence in the corridors, it will be a satellite of Lula, undertaking campaigns in order to pressure him (and perhaps recruit some of the leftists who stayed in the ranks and in the ministerial easy chairs of the PT) rather than preparing the proletariat to come out on top in a frontal clash with the bourgeois government. The same is true of the other heralds of a new party emanating from the Workers Party, who all seek, as we have said, a second edition of the PT. The PSTU, for example, has undertaken the formation of a “Coordinating Committee of Struggles” (Conlutas) for the workers, students, etc. They have called a demonstration in Brasília on June 16 to protest against the government’s labor and university reforms. But rather than waging a bitter fight within the mass organizations of the workers such as the CUT, they are trying to form their own organization with the same popular-frontist content as the CUT, but which

⁵ O Trabalho is linked to the International Liaison Committee for a Workers International led by Pierre Lambert’s Parti des Travailleurs in France.

⁶ Corrente Socialista do Trabalhadores (CST – Socialist Workers Tendency), a grouping of ex-Morenoites that stayed inside the PT when the PSTU was thrown out, led by Babá.

⁷ Movimento Terra, Trabalho e Liberdade (MTL), another split from the mainstream Morenoites.

they can use to maneuver with the CUT and PT tops. They are faithfully following the line of their mentor, Nahuel Moreno, whose method was to always present himself as a "left-wing" variant of every "new" movement, from General Perón to Ayatollah Khomeini.

Protest politics, no matter with how many red flags, is very distant from revolutionary politics which seeks to mobilize the power of the proletariat in a class offensive. All of them, from the PSOL to the PSTU, PCO, O Trabalho and other currents to their left, call to "break with the IMF." Some want to "repudiate" the foreign debt, others want to renegotiate it or impose a moratorium. But how? Either one says explicitly that this will only be possible through international socialist revolution, extending to the imperialist centers, which these Third Worldist opportunists do not do, or one is pretending, explicitly or implicitly, that it is possible for a capitalist country to "become independent" and impose its "sovereignty" in a capitalist framework, which is lying to the workers. Even an isolated bureaucratically deformed workers state like Cuba is under tremendous pressure from the international market and imperialist institutions. For that reason, it is necessary to break with all variants of nationalism and undertake the road of permanent revolution.

The contradictions of the opportunist left are summed up in the agrarian question. The PT minister of agricultural development, Miguel Rosseto, and the senator Heloísa Helena are both members of the Democracia Socialista (DS) tendency linked to the United Secretariat (USec) of the late Ernest Mandel, which for several decades has tried to pass itself off as the Fourth International. The calls of these pseudo-Trotskyists for (bourgeois) "agrarian reform" have nothing to do with the politics of Trotsky and his Fourth International, who fought for *agrarian revolution* in conjunction with proletarian revolution. Presenting themselves today as spokesmen for different parties (PT and PSOL), neither can offer a revolutionary class-struggle leadership to the landless peasants, who are the most visible image of capitalist misery, nor to the Brazilian industrial proletariat, which is bound hand and foot to the bosses by means of the popular front. The O Trabalho tendency launched a noisy campaign (including an

international petition) asking Helena, the DS and the USec how they can stay in the same organization with the likes of Rosseto, who says he respects "the demonstrations of the rural landowners" which are nothing but provocations to the landless peasants. But O Trabalho is still affiliated with the PT, the same as Rosseto! The cynicism of the Mandelite, Lambertist and Morenoite opportunists is limitless.

The class struggle cannot be limited to Brazil, despite the fact that it is the largest country of Latin America. While the opportunists call for bringing the Brazilian troops home from Haiti, revolutionaries fight for the *expulsion* of the occupation troops. Brazilian transport workers (above all in the airports and ports) must refuse to send any cargo to Haiti. Against the imperialist "war on terror," we are for the defeat of the imperialists (in the first instance of U.S. imperialism, but also of its imperialist allies and rivals who recently gave their seal of approval to the occupation under the masquerade of the United Nations), and for the defense of Afghanistan and Iraq through workers action around the world. While Lula seeks to "open up" China for capitalist exploitation, we Trotskyists fight for the defense of it and all the remaining deformed workers states (including North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba) against counter-revolution, both external and internal.

Popular fronts and fascism, Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Program, are the last recourse of imperialism faced with the "threat" of workers revolution. Forty years after the bloody coup d'état that resulted in two decades of military dictatorship in Brazil, it is clear that Lula and his allies are doing the "dirty work" for the bourgeoisie, making it unnecessary for new dictator-generals to overthrow popular-front governments as occurred in Chile and Brazil in the past. Whether the iron fist of capital is shown openly or is hidden in a "democratic" glove, it is the working class that will suffer the blows. To defeat the bourgeoisie and its minions it is necessary to build a revolutionary workers party such as the Bolsheviks Lenin and Trotsky did. This is the task which the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista has set for itself as the Brazilian section of the League for the Fourth International. ■

VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, seção da Liga pela IV Internacional

Nº 8 janeiro-fevereiro de 2005

preço R\$ 2,00

Derrotar suas "reformas" antioperárias ditadas pelo FMI!
Abaixo o frentão popular de Lula
arma do capital contra os trabalhadores!

Não precisamos do "novo partido" social-democrata dos burocratas!
Fogar um partido operário revolucionário!



Leia e assine

VANGUARDA OPERÁRIA

Órgão informativo da Liga
Quarta-Internacionalista do
Brasil

R\$4,00 por 4 números

Endereço:
Caixa Postal 084027
CEP 27251-740
Volta Redonda, RJ

Lula Acts as Sheriff for Yankee Imperialism in Latin America Drive Brazilian Troops Out of Haiti!

This past April, the Pentagon high command was in a bind. Its occupation forces in Iraq were besieged, as they still are today. Their first attempt to storm the rebel city of Falluja had failed miserably in the face of the tenacious resistance of the Iraqi insurgents and the international protest unleashed by the massacre of hundreds of residents, women and children. They urgently needed reinforcements. At the same time they had an expeditionary force posted to Haiti as part of the operation to overthrow and kidnap Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and to replace his democratically elected government with a new regime, headed by the former United Nations official Gérard Tortue, in alliance with the heads of the death squads. How to free up the U.S. troops in Haiti in order to send them to Iraq? Enter Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, riding to the aid of Yankee imperialism.

Twice already, Lula had offered his services to his masters in Washington to “keep order” in their Latin American “backyard.” Even before taking office, in December 2002, the Brazilian president-elect sent a representative to Venezuela to try to convince President Hugo Chávez to reconcile with the pro-imperialist coup plotters. Then in October 2003, Lula and the newly elected Argentine president Néstor Kirchner went to La Paz, Bolivia in a failed attempt to save the presidency of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, shortly before he had to flee the country in the face of workers uprising. Despite the negative balance sheet of his previous first-aid missions on behalf of the government of George W. Bush, now Lula is offering once again to act as a fireman to put out the flames of rebellion in Latin America. Contrary to his supposedly “critical” stance toward the U.S. invasion of Iraq, by sending 1,600 Brazilian troops to Haiti, as the nucleus of a “peacekeeping” force under U.N. auspices, Lula freed up American troops to join the brutal colonial occupation of the Mesopotamian lands.

Since being installed in the Palácio do Planalto (Brazil’s White House), the leader of the Workers Party (PT – Partido dos Trabalhadores) has tried to project Brazil, a semi-colonial “Third World” country, but with the tenth largest economy in the world, as a sub-imperialist regional power. In addition to his Haitian adventure, he has proposed a joint Franco-Brazilian intervention in Guinea Bissau, in West Africa. In this context, in mid-August Lula traveled to the Haitian capital to attend a soccer game, duly baptized the “Peace Game.” Soccer stars Ronaldo, Ronaldinho and the Brazilian team had to be brought to the stadium in armored personnel carriers. With this bullet-proof “soccer diplomacy,” Lula hopes to get a permanent seat for Brazil in the U.N. Security Council. In taking up these ambitions of the Brazilian bourgeoisie, he is expressing the social-democratic – that is, pro-capitalist – politics of the PT and the bourgeois character of the coalition that elected the “comrade president.” This *popular front* chains the workers to sectors of the class enemy, with the aim of blocking any struggles that point toward workers revolution. With his free-market, decidedly anti-worker economic policy,



Brazilian troops pass in review before President Lula before leaving on mission to Haiti, 31 May 2004.

Lula longs to be the Tony Blair of South America.

Despite Lula’s rhetoric of “social justice,” imposing order in Haiti, even if it is done with blue helmets and berets, means first of all putting down the impoverished masses of the Port-au-Prince slums and other Haitian cities at gunpoint. When a series of hurricanes devastated the Caribbean country in August and September, leaving a toll of thousands dead, Tortue’s puppet government proved itself utterly incapable of bringing any aid to the victims trapped on the roofs of their inundated shacks. For their part, the “humanitarian” and “peacekeeping” troops of the U.N. limited themselves to guarding the food warehouses while the population was starving. Then, in early October, when the population went into the streets, fed up with the incompetence and corruption of the imposed government, Brazilian troops of the U.N. Mission for the Stabilization of Haiti (MINUSTAH, according to its initials in French) came to the rescue of the infamous Haitian National Police to prevent a popular uprising.

U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell praised the growing role of the Brazilian government in Latin America and declared Brazil to be a “good, serious and important candidate” for a permanent seat in the U.N. Security Council. The MINUSTAH commander, Brazilian general Heleno Ribeiro Pereira, returned the favor to the Republican Bush administration, accusing the Democratic candidate John Kerry of being responsible for the unrest in Haiti, claiming that his support for the ousted president “created expectations that instability in the country and a change in U.S. policy could contribute to the return of ex-president Aristide” (Agência Brasil, 17 October). But the good will of the imperialists is paid for with the fury of the oppressed. The military officers themselves noted the growing popular hostility against them. “They saw us as a hope that things would get better, but it didn’t turn out that way, and there is no perspective for that to happen. They’re frustrated,” commented



Andrés Leighton/AP

Brazilian commander Ribeiro Pereira (right) takes over from his U.S. counterpart, General Coleman, 1 June 2004.

the Brazilian contingent spokesman, Col. Felipe Carbonell (*Jornal do Brasil*, 9 October).

It was only a matter of time until there was a massacre of black Haitians by the Brazilian “guardians of peace.” On September 30, a demonstration of some 10,000 unarmed partisans of Aristide were attacked by gunfire from the police forces, while the MINUSTAH troops stood by observing. That night and in the following days, there were repeated joint incursions into the poor neighborhoods of Bel Air and Fort National by the police and Brazilian troops. Dozens of residents were executed in cold blood by hooded cops, and scores were arrested. When a couple of policemen later showed up beheaded, spokesmen of the puppet government announced that Aristide’s supporters had launched “Operation Baghdad” of violence carried out by gangs “linked to drug trafficking.” They hoped thereby to justify their massacre as part of the U.S.’ terrorist “war on terror” in Iraq. During October, more than 80 people were killed in the Haitian capital, the great majority of them slum dwellers gunned down by the police, while Brazilian soldiers gave the cops cover.

Sending Brazilian troops to Haiti provoked discontent even within the ranks of the Workers Party and the CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores) labor federation. A petition supplicating “His Excellency, the President of the Republic” to not undertake this step bore the signatures of some 15 PT federal deputies. But the campaign didn’t go beyond a few public meetings in which the president was respectfully petitioned in the name of sovereignty, fraternity and the right of nations to self-determination to desist from allying himself with Bush. Far from taking the side of the impoverished Haitians resisting the occupation forces, they expressed their “full understanding” for the Brazilian troops faced with the “difficulties” inherent in their mission. Even pseudo-Trotskyist groups like the Partido Causa Operária (PCO – Workers Cause Party) share this viewpoint: “The Brazilian troops are having problems in the poor neighborhoods of Haiti with organized gangs linked to drug trafficking” (*Causa Operária online*, 22 October). In reality, the big narcotraffickers are the former military officers who are today allied with the government of marionettes installed by Washington and defended by the Brazilian troops. When the PCO demands, “Brazilian troops out of Haiti!” they are pro-

posing a different policy to Lula, rather than fighting for the defeat of the capitalist government which is imposing IMF starvation policies to the letter on Brazilian workers while imposing Washington’s dictates on the Haitian masses.

In contrast to this timid social-democratic advice, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil stresses the need for a class response, mobilizing the power of the working class against the military occupation of Haiti by Brazilian troops in the service of Yankee imperialism. The LQB also emphasizes the racist character of this imperialist occupation, which seeks to subjugate the country where the first successful revolution of black slaves occurred, defeating the armies of three colonial powers (French, Spanish and British). That is why Haiti has earned the unrelenting hatred of the bourgeoisies of the world. The LQB also calls on workers to boycott shipments of arms and military equipment. As a section of the League for the Fourth International, it calls on workers to resist the imperialist occupation and to fight to *throw Brazilian troops out of Haiti!*

We reprint below the resolution of the Comitê de Luta Classista (CLC – Class Struggle Caucus), affiliated with the LQB, calling on Brazilian and Haitian workers to join in forcing out Brazilian occupation troops, and on Brazilian workers to refuse to transport military cargo. The motion was passed by a plenum of the Rio de Janeiro state teachers union (SEPE) last July and by a conference of the Rio state health workers union (SINDSPREV-RJ) in early September. On January 14, the motion was approved by the national congress of the National Confederation of Educational Workers (CNTE), despite objections by the Articulação caucus of Lula’s supporters.

For the Expulsion of Brazilian Occupation Troops From Haiti!

It is very good that the SEPE placed on its Internet site a call to repudiate the Brazilian troops in Haiti, sent there by the bourgeois popular-front government of the PT and PL (Liberal Party).

However, it is necessary to go beyond repudiation. Haiti is the only country of the world where blacks defeated slavery with a revolution, succeeding as no other before it. The *black Jacobin* revolutionaries defeated the troops of Napoleon, thereby earning the eternal hatred of the bourgeoisie which condemned Haiti to poverty and isolation, turning it into one of the poorest countries of the world.

The working class, particularly in a country like Brazil, with a black majority, must fight and combat imperialism, which is preparing to once again massacre the long-suffering but combative Haitian people.

Therefore, this 29th Congress should authorize the CNTE to call on the workers and their organizations to aid the Haitian working people in expelling the invading Brazilian troops. If there is any transport of military armament, we must issue a call on the Brazilian working class to boycott arms shipments. We should take up the example of the Brazilian seamen of Ceará who boycotted the transport of slaves to the Southeast, which was one of the most important steps leading to the abolition of slavery in Brazil.

Break with All the Capitalist Parties – Build a Revolutionary Workers Party

Million Worker March: Back Door Support for Capitalist Democrats

The following leaflet was distributed by the Internationalist Group at the October 17 “Million Worker March” in Washington.

On October 17, a “Million Worker March” has been called at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., declaring that “by organizing in our own name and putting forth an independent workers’ agenda, we shall hold everyone’s feet to the fire.” The march has been called by dissident union officials, who are unhappy with the blank check that the top labor officialdom of the AFL-CIO has given to Democratic Party nominee John Kerry. Millions of working people are burning with outrage over the way the cynical Bush regime has trampled on them, along with the exploited and oppressed the world over. Yet the march organizers, with their social-patriotic calls to “restore America” and “restore our democracy,” are diverting this potentially explosive anger into the safe channels of capitalist electoral politics. Symbolizing this is the fact that one of the featured speakers is none other than Jesse Jackson, whose calling has always been to corral disaffected black and working people back into the Democratic fold. The attempt by the Million Worker March is to push this capitalist party to the left – a dead end if ever there was one.

Certainly, MWM organizers talk of the need for “independent mobilization of working people across America.” The union local that initiated the march, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in San Francisco, is well-known for its “progressive” tradition. In keeping with that tradition, the resolution calling for the march denounces the Bush administration for attacking union rights, waging an unjust war, labeling opposition unpatriotic, etc. with not a word of criticism of the

Democrats. The MWM’s list of demands raises nothing that liberal Democrats haven’t called for in the past, starting with a “single-payer health care” system harking back to the attempt by Bill and Hillary Clinton to reform the private medical insurance industry. It calls to increase taxes on corporations and the rich, fund public education, protect Social Security against privatization, and to “slash” the military budget (that is, scale it back, rather than opposing one cent going for U.S. imperialism’s killing machine).

With the march being held in the capital, two weeks before the presidential vote, it doesn’t take advanced mathematics to see what this adds up to: a forlorn attempt to pressure Kerry & Co. into “addressing our needs and our agenda.”

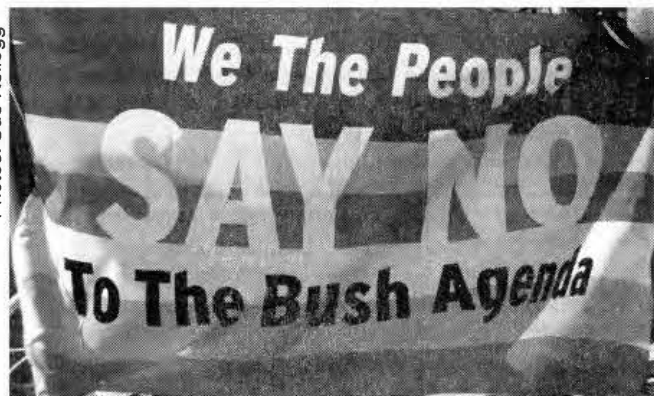
In the final weeks leading up to the November 2 elections, we’re offered the “choice” between two millionaire candidates. John Kerry and George Bush, representing the partner parties of American capitalism, the Democrats and Republicans, who are competing over who can be the “toughest” commander in chief of U.S. imperialism. And as a supposed “alternative” to the two-party system, there’s a millionaire “third party” candidate, Ralph Nader, running on the right-wing populist Reform ticket with the support of some left-wing opportunists. The Republicans want to scare the population into re-electing Bush by waving around the threat of terrorism. The Democrats want to scare people into voting for Kerry by brandishing the threat of four more years of the sinister Bush regime.

As tens of thousands of Iraqis are slaughtered by the Pentagon’s army of occupation, and over 1,000 U.S. soldiers have died in Washington’s “endless war” to rule the world, millions of workers in the United States have lost their jobs. Forty million lack any kind of health insurance. Real wages are steadily falling. More than 15,000 immigrants rounded up under the USA PATRIOT Act and other police-state laws have been ordered deported. More than 20,000 names are on the government’s “no-fly” list. From the outset, the imperialist war on Afghanistan and Iraq has also been a war on workers, the poor, oppressed minorities and immigrants “at home.”

Millions of working people in this country know they are getting royally screwed. They’re fed up and pissed off. The question is what to do about it.

In Europe and other advanced capitalist countries, workers are tied into the system by social-democratic parties that claim to represent, in some sense, the interests of working people. In the U.S., labor is directly chained to the capitalist Democrats. Traditionally, the way this has worked is that opposition movements are defused by the arguments of “lesser evilism,” that they have to vote Democratic in order to “fight the right.” But since Bill

Photos: Sue Kellogg



Million Worker March was “ABB” (Anybody But Bush) event for “progressive” union bureaucrats to build support for Democrats Kerry/Edwards (or minor bourgeois politicians like Nader and the Greens).

Clinton, this has been a hard sell, since the “New Democrats” hardly differ from the Republicans. Enter Ralph Nader, who cobbles together a populist platform appealing both to the “left” and the right, lambasting “totalitarian China” and “illegal immigrants” while decrying “corporate control” of the government. This has little appeal to “progressive” trade unionists, who fear votes for Nader could open the way for a Bush victory. So they opt for an “independent mobilization” to pressure the Democrats.

It's by no means the first time this ploy has been tried. In 1936, Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt ran with “Dixiecrat” segregationist John Garner as his vice president, in the midst of the labor upsurge that gave birth to the CIO industrial unions. To make voting for FDR palatable to the most conscious workers, the American Labor Party was founded in New York so that unionists could vote for the “progressive” capitalist president on an “independent” ballot line. (The Communist Party ran Earl Browder for president, but CPers were told to round up votes for FDR.) In the 1960s, there was a similar scene, when New Leftists were induced to vote for Vietnam war-monger Lyndon B. Johnson against rabid right-wing Republican Barry Goldwater under the slogan “part of the way with LBJ.” The current formula for this “lesser evil” capitalist politics is “anybody but Bush” (ABB), meaning “nobody but Kerry.” What the organizers of the Million Worker March want is for working people to vote for Kerry on November 2, while “holding his feet to the fire” by coming out on October 17.

Last June, AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney had a memo sent around to all state and local labor councils informing them that the federation “is NOT a co-sponsor” of the Million Worker March, arguing that it is “absolutely crucial that we commit the efforts of our labor movement to removing George W. Bush from office.” In response, the MWM organizers made it clear that their action does not undercut the drive to channel labor's votes yet again to the Democrats – on the contrary. Chris Silvera, secretary-treasurer of NYC Teamsters Local 808, wrote: “The Million Worker March is a crucial vehicle for voter mobilization. The timing of it, coming two weeks before the election makes the march the cheapest, most effective get-out-the-vote initiative ever undertaken by the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO.” More left-wing labor activists, such as the *Maritime Workers Monitor* (13 October), put out by ILWU Local 10 executive board member Jack Heyman and longshoremen in Portland and Seattle, call for “critical support” to the Washington march, “because workers in this country are catching hell and we need to organize to fight back.” But saying workers should be “leery of the participation in the march by Jesse Jackson, the pied piper of the Dixiecrat/Democrat Party,” this grouping builds support for this class-collaborationist march.

The march's position on the war is characteristic. The ILWU Local 10 resolution mentions the “unjust” war against and occupation of Iraq, although it says nothing about Afghanistan (which most Democratic politicians support). But the demands and mission statement of the Million Worker March say nothing at all



Sue Kelllogg

Internationalist Group called for building revolutionary workers party in opposition to all the capitalist parties and politicians.

about the war, not even mentioning Iraq. Clearly, they wanted to make it possible for union bureaucrats who supported the pro-war Democrats to sign up without formally opposing the war. An affiliated “Antiwar 4 the Million Worker March” was set up under the auspices of the International Action Center and International ANSWER to put out antiwar items. These statements appeal to growing defeatist sentiment among sections of the ruling class with their call to “bring the troops home now,” and to social-patriotic union bureaucrats with the call for “jobs not war,” they don’t take a side *against* U.S. imperialism and in defense of resistance against the colonial occupation. The MWM decries the “undisguised class war” waged by the bosses against working people, but its conclusion is to try to pressure the Democrats to be more worker-friendly. (Meanwhile it imitates the march name used by the virulently anti-worker Louis Farrakhan, the man who wanted Malcolm X dead.) The Internationalist Group, in contrast, has called on working people to wage *class war against the imperialist war, to defend Iraq and Afghanistan and defeat U.S. imperialism.*

Neither Bush, nor Kerry, nor Nader will put an end to the devastation of Iraq: they seek a “way out” of the quagmire Washington has gotten itself into. The workers of the world must have a different goal: the *defeat* of predatory U.S. imperialism. War, racism, poverty and unemployment – these are not issues of “priorities” or an “agenda” to be addressed by lobbying Congress or pressuring the Democrats. These are the products of a system that is based on exploitation and oppression, a system that generates endless wars: the capitalist system. Many working people are aware of this, although they feel powerless to do anything about it. “Regime change at home” is a slogan raised at many protests whose organizers round up votes for the Democrats. But the Democrats are an essential part of the regime. To put an end to these scourges afflicting humanity, it will take nothing less than international socialist revolution. And to prepare the way for that, the working class must oust the pro-capitalist union bureaucracy, break with all the capitalist parties – Democrats, Republicans, as well as the Nader populists – and build a revolutionary workers party. ■



Abu Ghraib 101 at BMCC?

“Fatherland Security” Hits CUNY

The following is an updated version of an article that originally appeared in Revolution No. 2 (October 2004), publication of the Internationalist Clubs and the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club at CUNY.

By Abram Negrete

A sinister “Homeland Security” course with links to the Guantánamo prison camp, death squads, and the Israeli Mossad spy agency is in the works at CUNY’s Borough of Manhattan Community College. Presented to BMCC’s Faculty Council last May, the course is the keystone of a proposed Security Management Certificate Program.

The program will begin soon but is still “being developed,” according to officials at the lower Manhattan school. *Now is the time for militant protests to stop it cold!*

The BMCC program, which includes study of “interrogation techniques” and “technology for surveillance,” is part of a trend promoted by the Task Force on Homeland Security of the American Association of Community Colleges. Among the twenty-one members of this task force, CUNY is represented by BMCC President Antonio Perez. A look at its activities, as well as the BMCC program’s advisory board, exposes a veritable rogue’s gallery of repression.

Front and center is the *Guantánamo* connection:

The task force boasts of the upstate Homeland Security Management Institute opened in December 2003: “The institute is directed by Col. John J. Perrone Jr., [who] previously served as commander of the Joint Detainee Operations Group...in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba” (*Community College Times* special Homeland Security issue, 28 September). Perrone was the “first employee” of the institute, which is to be “a national model for homeland security training,” “extending its reach through the country’s network of 1,100 community colleges,” proclaims its host campus (Monroe Community College *News* [Rochester, New York], 9 December 2003).

Perrone “can speak to Home Land Security issues from a unique perspective: he has been on the front lines,” says a puff piece on the colonel. That’s one way of describing the former Camp Commandant at the infamous prison torture camp for “suspected terrorists.”

Then there is the *union-busting* connection:

The “BMCC Advisory Board – Security Management Committee” for the proposed certificate program includes representatives of companies like OCS Security, Guard Screen

and Hill & Associates, whose activities include “confidential investigations and business intelligence.” Also represented is the American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS), whose affiliates include firms specializing in strikebreaking and union-busting. One advertises “protection of over a hundred businesses during labor disputes and organization drives”; another notes that when “a strike is taking place,” picketers “can be a true hindrance to company productivity.”

The ASIS Annual Seminar, held this year in Dallas, featured sessions on “Private Policing on Public Streets,” “Security Planning for Large Scale Downsizing” (“while maintaining secrecy”), and “the national strategy and roadmap...for achieving closer and more productive cooperation between private security and law enforcement to improve homeland security.”

There is the *SAS/Northern Ireland, Colombia* and *Iraq* connection:

William J. Daly also sits on the Security Management Committee for the BMCC course, representing Control Risks Group, Inc., of which he is Senior Vice President. In Colombia, Control Risks advises foreign corporations on “prospects for victory” in the dirty counterinsurgency war against leftist rebels (Control Risks Group report on Colombia, June 2004).

The Center for Public Integrity notes that Control Risks has been a pioneer in “military privatization,” getting off the ground in the 1970s by hiring officers from Britain’s deadly Special Air Services (SAS). SAS reserve regiments “have frequently served as a formal and informal recruiting center for mercenary operations,” the center notes.

“The SAS is an assassination squad, like the South American death squads,” notes Raymond Murray in his 1998 book *State Violence: Northern Ireland 1969-1997*. Among its other murderous actions in the service of imperialism, the agency ran a covert war in the 1960s against leftists in North Yemen. Control Risks also employs former FBI men and other specialists in repression.

The Iraq war is connected to the BMCC program not only through government links but through “privatized” mercenary services. As the U.S. and British imperialists commit one war crime after another, Control Risks, like the American Kroll & Associates, carries out “security” operations in Iraq (“Ex-SAS Flock to Iraq,” London *Telegraph*, 12 October 2003).

Most sinister of all is the *Mossad/death squad* connection:

The BMCC course advisory board includes another company whose name spells deadly repression: International Secu-

"Firestorm" of Protest Against Homeland Security Course at BMCC



As part of our struggle against U.S. imperialism from Iraq to the "home front," Internationalist militants at the City University of New York exposed attempts to institute training in "Homeland Security" repression at CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College. Our exposé in *Revolution* (begins on facing page) set off protests this fall and winter from BMCC students, CUNY faculty and others who, in the words of a front-page story in the right-wing New York *Sun* (24 December), see the program as "an oppressive outgrowth of the Department of Homeland Security." The *Revolution* article was picked up by CUNY campus newspapers, and gave rise to a "Fact Sheet" widely distributed by student activists.

CUNY Internationalist Club and Revolutionary Reconstruction Club members spoke out against the repression program at conferences sponsored by the CUNY faculty union (the Professional Staff Congress) and University Faculty Senate, and in extensive news coverage on WBAI radio. We also used the platform of a City Council hearing to expose the BMCC program as well as the anti-

labor actions of the council's bourgeois politicians (see article, page 62).

On December 9, a spirited protest (photos on back page and at left) of 50 students marched through BMCC's downtown Manhattan campus, chanting "No 'Homeland Security' at CUNY." The demonstration also denounced the latest round of exclusionary tests aimed at driving more working-class and minority students out of the country's largest urban public university. The protest was called by the BMCC student government, which voted to "steadfastly condemn" the program. Two weeks later, the BMCC Faculty Council was the scene of a "firestorm" of protest in which 15 students and professors spoke against the Homeland program. As professors expressed indignation at the administration's attempt to sneak the program through at the end of the previous semester, one speaker after another was loudly applauded.

BMCC administrators clearly hope the issue will die out. Yet as a result of widespread protest and exposure, on January 16 the CUNY-wide University Student Senate steering committee unanimously endorsed the BMCC student government motion condemning any and all "Homeland Security" programs at CUNY. Protests must continue in order to make sure the Repression 101 program is thrown out completely, once and for all.

rity and Defense Systems (ISDS), an Israeli firm represented by its president, Leo Gleser. The ISDS web site says the company was "established in 1982 by highly experienced officers, former operatives of I.S.A. Israeli Security Agency, the Mossad and the Defence Forces." The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (31 August) says Gleser and partner Arye Avnat "met in the early 1970s during their military service in the Haruv reconnaissance unit" and later set up ISDS, which recently hired "former Mossad department chief Yehiam Meret" and Israel's former police commissioner. Together with the CIA, the Mossad is one of the deadliest, dirtiest instruments of state terror in the world.

When Gleser attended a Homeland Security fair in Chile last year, the Chilean news magazine *Qué Pasa* (31 October 2003) ran an article titled "Ex-Mossad Men Come to Chile." It reported that the presence of this purportedly retired colonel of Israeli intelligence "captivated the attention of military circles." His company "has become known for its services as advisor to the State Department of the U.S." – godfather of former military dictator Pinochet – and "has the authorization and sponsorship of the

Israeli Defense Ministry for its projects."

Among Gleser's "projects," the article cites the following: "Leo Gleser has some strong detractors.... One of the harshest criticisms is that in the early '80s Israeli intelligence sent him to train members of the military in Central America. During his stay there he trained the leaders of the legendary Intelligence Battalion 316, a squad operating with the Honduran Army, which human rights organizations blame for disappearing 191 persons."

In other words, this death squad – part of the CIA's reign of terror during Reagan's campaign of exterminating Central American insurgents – used techniques of "disappearing" people perfected by Israel's intelligence agencies against Palestinian Arabs (as well as Mordechai Vanunu, who blew the whistle on Israel's huge nuclear bomb factory), and innumerable others around the world. Coverage of Gleser's training of this Honduran death squad has also cited the 1991 exposé by Andrew and Leslie Cockburn in their book *Dangerous Liaison: The Inside Story of the U.S.-Israeli Covert Relationship*.

In 1997, ISDS went to Mexico to provide "antiterrorist" training to a special "urban intervention" unit of the Judicial Police, a force so detested for its brutality and corruption that it was later disbanded by Mexico's president.

BMCC and "World War IV"

In the special Homeland Security issue of the AACC's *Community College Times* (28 September), BMCC President Perez writes that the attacks of September 11, 2001 were "the first salvo of what one observer has called World War IV." He goes on: "Community colleges need to be in the vanguard of those institutions helping to prepare our nation and its defenders to respond to attacks."

The proposed 30-credit BMCC security management certificate consists of ten required courses. Top of the list is the "Homeland Security" course. It features a guest speaker from the New York State Department of Homeland Security and readings from Tom Ridge's Big Brother agency. Noting that "trends clearly demonstrate increased demand" for "investigative services" and "surveillance systems," the course defines "national security" as protecting "national values, interests, and institutions." This requires "understand[ing] current threats against domestic and international assets." Like what, political protests and "Third World" insurgencies? You bet.

Next on the list of classes is "Security Management Principles," which includes "Intelligence gathering" and "Interview and interrogation techniques." Readings include an interrogation textbook written by a top "lie-detector" expert together with a former FBI agent and member of the Philadelphia police. Also on the syllabus: *Undercover Investigations in the Workplace*. That's the kind of investigation employers carry out against union organizing drives.

How about the CIA interrogation handbook for Central American death squads? Is that going to be on the reading list as well?

Or will Col. Perrone of Guantánamo come to lecture on interrogation techniques? After all, he told Rochester TV (15 December 2003): "The time to retrieve...information is generally in the first few days of captivity." He could also lecture on the use of hoods, shackles, prisoners being forced to kneel for days at a time, and other ways to "retrieve" information. And who will they choose as subjects for interrogation? Members of student governments who have lost elections, perhaps?

Then we come to the proposed BMCC course on "Terrorism and Counterterrorism." This part of the certificate program uses the feds' definition of terrorism as any "violent" act "against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian populations, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." So a militant labor struggle, a march against racist police brutality or protest of military recruiters can be branded terrorist. The proposed course defines counterterrorism as "any act intended to combat, control, or resolve terrorism." This is the No. 1 pretext for torture in the world today, so Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib would fit right in.

Repression Is a Growth Industry

Programs similar to the one BMCC seeks to establish are cited with pride by the American Association of Community Colleges. The Homeland Security Management Institute is just one, and AACC notes Perrone's institute is "working with" the State University of New York (SUNY) as well as the League for Innovation in the Community Colleges and the AACC itself.

Still looking for those weapons of mass destruction? George W. Bush's hand-picked expert now says...guess what, no "WMD" in Iraq – as if the world didn't already know this was a transparent pretext all along. But the AACC is not to be deterred. The association did a survey of community colleges and says "One in every five colleges had programs or courses in weapons of mass destruction (WMD) awareness or WMD preparedness."

And the threat to corn keeps them up at night. Corn? "The cornfields of Iowa may seem an unlikely target of terrorists, but experts believe they are," the association paper reports. Therefore, Iowa's Kirkwood Community College got a \$3.2 million grant in August, one of 14 approved by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. *Community College Times* (28 September) notes Homeland Security "received more than 215 applications for the grant."

24 December 2004

The NEW YORK Sun

Protest Over 'Homeland Security U' BMCC STUDENTS, FACULTY OBJECT TO A PROPOSED PROGRAM

By JACOB GERSHMAN Staff Reporter of the Sun

Furious students and faculty members at the Borough of Manhattan Community College are demanding that the school abandon plans for a certificate program on security management. They view it as an endorsement of the Bush administration's Department of Homeland Security....

At a school where the student government headquarters is decorated with a poster of a tortured Abu Ghraib prisoner and another that calls President Bush a "mad-man," some students and faculty members have reacted to the proposed program with intense suspicion....

At a meeting Wednesday of the faculty council, tempers flared, according to those who were present, as faculty members shouted questions at the designer of the proposed program, Elinor Garely, a professor in the business management department.

The student government is handing out a "fact sheet" on the program with the header: "Stop BMCC 'Homeland' Repression Program Now!"

"Faculty members point out that if BMCC becomes known as 'Homeland Security U,' this will intimidate and drive away many present and potential students, especially immigrants," the leaflet states....

The same paper reports that the U.S. Department of Defense has funded a program on cyberterrorism at the Community College of Allegheny County in Pennsylvania. Cyberterrorism? How about the FBI's seizure, on October 7, of servers used by Indymedia. The feds' assault affected at least twenty of the news collective's sites around the world. And the American spy agency did it *in England*. The action was reportedly retaliation for someone, somewhere having taken pictures of undercover agents photographing demonstrators.

CUNY and the Merchants of Death

Connections between CUNY and leading arms manufacturers were revealed at a Professional Staff Congress Teach-In held December 17. In a presentation on "Globalization, Privatization, War—At CUNY," PSC activist Renate Bridenthal noted that "Automatic Target Recognition" was the topic of a conference two years ago where a City College researcher joined representatives of the Army Aviation and Missile Command, the Naval Air Warfare Center, NASA and Lockheed Martin. CCNY is planning a \$198 million Advanced Science Research Center that will focus on biosensing ("identification, monitoring, and/or control of biologic phenomena"). The center is receiving support from Raytheon, Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin, according to CUNY's Master Plan for 2004-2008. Huge weapons firms like these are always looking for new and profitable ways to "control" targeted "biological phenomena" (people), by killing them.

Weapons contractors like these are infamous from the slaughter in Iraq to the Vietnam War, when death merchants were driven off campus by student protestors horrified by the carpet-bombing, anti-personnel devices, Agent Orange and white phosphorus made by U.S. weapons firms and dropped from their planes. Images of children with their skin burned off by napalm were seared into the consciousness of millions — one reason the U.S. military does all it can today (with the kept media's cooperation) to stop us from seeing pictures of its crimes in Iraq.

What are Raytheon, Northrup and Lockheed manufacturing now? Raytheon makes "bunker buster" 5000-pound bombs and Tomahawk cruise missiles. Northrup makes the B-2 bomber dropping those 5000-pound bombs on Iraq. War crimes in the name of the "Homeland" are big business, and getting bigger by the day, as Northrup boasts that it meets "current and emerging national defense needs, including anti-terrorism and homeland security" (Common Dreams, "The War Profiteers," December 2001).

As for Lockheed Martin, it is making a killing in Iraq:

"This Bethesda, Maryland-based company is the world's #1 military contractor as well as the world's largest arms exporter. Lockheed Martin built the U-2 and the SR-71 Blackbird spy planes. Today they make F-16, F/A-22 jet fighter, Hellfire and Javelin missiles, as well as designing nuclear weapons. Its F-117 stealth attack fighters were used to 'shock and awe' the population of Iraq at the start of the US invasion, while since the start of that war the Air Force has increased production of Lockheed's PAC-3 Patriot missile" (Corp Watch report, "War Profiteers: Lockheed Martin").

For Militant Protest to Stop BMCC "Security" Course!

CUNY is no stranger to repression. The most prominent case is the relentless prosecution of Hostos student leader Miguel Malo for holding up a sign protesting cuts in Spanish and ESL programs. Last semester Baruch College arrested respected CCNY psychology professor Bill Crain for the "crime" of entering campus without an appointment.

As for "electronic surveillance," mentioned in the "Letter of Intent" (14 November 2003) for the certificate program, CUNY has done plenty of that itself. Just ask student activists at CCNY: in 1998 they found out a surveillance camera, disguised as a smoke detector, was aimed at their offices — a fact the campus paper was shut down for revealing!

Nor is CUNY new to connections with "private" spy companies linked to the long and bloody trail of the intelligence agencies. Hunter College hired the notorious, CIA-linked Kroll & Associates for a "thorough survey" of campus "security" (Hunter Envoy, 2 October 2003). The only outcome Hunter students heard about was the decision to lock the main entrance of the Thomas Hunter building — a move reversed after students kept going through anyway (setting off the alarm each time). CUNY students should demand to know the full story of what happened with Kroll.

The sinister course at BMCC is part of the wholesale onslaught against the most basic civil liberties and democratic rights carried out through the USA Patriot Act, passed and administered by Democrats *and* Republicans, and a vast array of repressive measures.

"BMCC students have already been victims of repression carried out in the name of 'Homeland Security,'" notes a Fact Sheet published on campus as part of the campaign against the security program: "We remember our classmates and friends who were taken away by the FBI, INS or other agencies after 9/11. Some were deported, others we never heard about again. On campus last semester, Haitian American student Elder Bertrand was harassed and assaulted by BMCC 'security'."

BMCC's large immigrant student population "stand to be adversely affected by a Homeland Security program" which would target them as "potential terrorists" to be "investigated, possibly imprisoned and/or deported as local subject matter for the curriculum," as noted in a report to the Student Government Association. The SGA voted to "steadfastly condemn any college program or curriculum that would teach, train, endorse or otherwise support 'Homeland Security' at BMCC."

Faculty members have warned against the intimidation of students that would result if BMCC becomes "Homeland Security U." As the Fact Sheet points out, "professors, librarians and campus workers are also targeted by the atmosphere of fear and intimidation tied in with 'Homeland Security' and 'USA Patriot' repression, reminiscent of the McCarthy era."

Fighting against this repression is part of the struggle for the *defeat* of U.S. imperialist aggression abroad and police terror, racism and exploitation here "at home."

BMCC's Repression 101 can and must be stopped. Students, faculty, workers and defenders of democratic rights must mobilize to protest and expose it massively, now! ■

New York City Council Hearings

Police Repression at CUNY

On December 8, the New York City Council's Committee on Higher Education held a hearing on the City University of New York's "Department of Public Safety." The committee is chaired by Democrat Charles Barron, a former Black Panther who, depending on his audience, sometimes uses militant and even "revolutionary" rhetoric to push his mayoral campaign.

In announcing the hearing, the committee cited "severe criticism" of the CUNY cops, citing their arrest of four CUNY students and a professor at the Hostos campus in 2001 and the pepper-spray attack on a fifth-grade graduation ceremony at Medgar Evers College in 2003. It noted that "CUNY peace officers are empowered by the New York State Criminal Procedure Law to make warrantless arrests, use force, including deadly physical force, to effect an arrest and execute warrantless searches."

While repeatedly proclaiming their support for the cops' supposed mission of making campuses "safe and secure" for all, council members also questioned the campus cops' weapons stockpiles (including some munitions, such as hollow-point bullets, legally off-limits to the NYPD). At the hearing, CUNY administrators and campus cop commanders gave hollow assurances that these items are for "training" only (at FBI training courses!), and that the department's use of "paramilitary" terminology showed no sinister intent.

The CUNY tops' snow job was exposed by testimony from a dozen witnesses, including students and faculty from Borough of Manhattan and Bronx Community Colleges, City College, Hunter College, the College of Staten Island and the CUNY Graduate Center. Attorney Ron McGuire gave extensive testimony on the history of campus repression and the escalation of police powers and brutality at CUNY.

Two Internationalist Group activists at CUNY testified at the hearing, in accordance with the Leninist policy of using such platforms to expose the depredations of the capitalist state and its auxiliary forces. Our second speaker was repeatedly cut off by Democratic pol Barron, who said the hearing was not the place for "ideological" statements.

Aubeen Lopez

My name is Aubeen Lopez, from Bronx Community College. I'm a member of the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club and of the Internationalist Group.

We are here to denounce repression at CUNY, such as the legal vendetta against Miguel Malo, a student leader at Hostos Community College. The case of Miguel Malo is crucial to us at Bronx Community College and throughout the CUNY system. He was arrested for holding up a sign protesting cuts in bilingual education and ESL programs. He was arrested in August 2001, three and a half years ago, and is still being dragged through the courts to this day. We demand that this outrageous prosecution be stopped, now, and that all charges be dropped.

Hostos is run like a little police state. Evidently we from

Bronx Community College are on their enemies list. BCC students, including members of our club, have even been blocked from going to the library at Hostos. This has happened even when students were sent there by their professor.

Meanwhile, on our campus, there is a constant, heavy police presence, intimidating students who are politically active. I have been harassed by campus cops because of my political activity, with repeated verbal abuse and a vile homophobic insult. Students from other CUNY campuses have been blocked from entering BCC. At BCC we have also had Miguel Malo leaflets torn down by administrators.

At Bronx Community College we have been fighting against the presence of military and police recruiters. We have held protests demanding all recruiters off campus. We have denounced the fact that they are recruiting human bullets for the imperialist war in Iraq, and exposed the lies and deceit they use to lure working-class and minority students. We are for the defeat of the imperialists, and driving the recruiters off all the campuses. We fight for open admissions and no tuition – a fight that can only be accomplished by mobilizing the power of the working class, independently of and against the Democratic and Republican politicians.

I want to say that we have no confidence whatsoever that the City Council is a defender of students' rights here. The Council has let itself be used as a grandstand for union-bashing against the city's teachers, with the head of the education committee calling for destroying the few union protections teachers have against an arbitrary administration that is responsible for the terrible state of public education. With regard to repression, when the City Council voted a resolution criticizing the U.S.A. Patriot Act last February, you did not call to *abolish* that police-state law, and you threw out clauses prohibiting the NYPD from collecting data on activist groups, participating in enforcing anti-immigrant laws or establishing a so-called anti-terrorism data base. But this is a platform to publicize repression by the CUNY administration, so we will use that platform.

Now, to top off the repressive measures at CUNY, the Borough of Manhattan Community College wants to implement a so-called Homeland Security program. We have already seen "Guantanamo on the Hudson." This "Fatherland Security" program at BMCC has been called "Abu Ghraib 101." It is a direct threat to immigrant students, activist students, minority students, and all of us. It must be stopped, now!

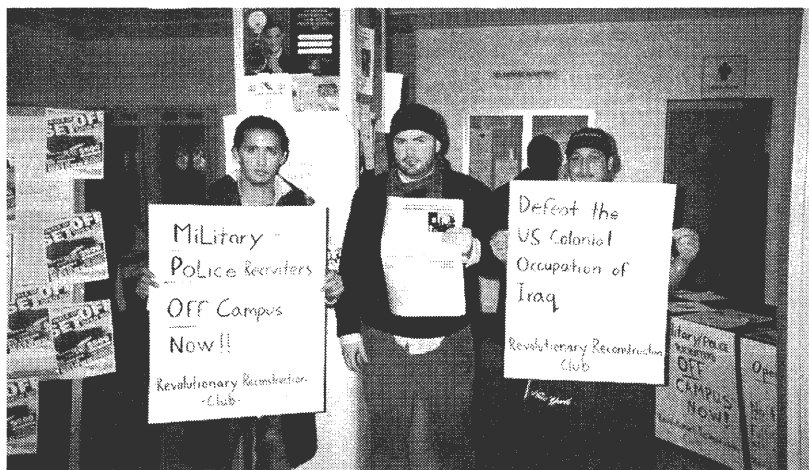
Abram Negrete

I am an activist in the Internationalist Group at CUNY. I can corroborate points made here by students and faculty who have been on the receiving end of police repression at CUNY. I was present at the City College conference on defending Mumia Abu-Jamal that, as a CCNY student mentioned today, the cops tried to break up with arrests. I've been surrounded by campus cops for distributing literature, and been

Drive Military/Cop Recruiters Off Campus!

On December 9, the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club at Bronx Community College carried out a protest against the presence of military recruiters on campus (photos on back page and at right). The protest in the cafeteria received a great amount of support from staff, faculty and students. Towards the end of the hour-long protest several students joined in with us and took pictures, right in front of the military recruiters' table, with signs calling for defeat of the colonial occupation of Iraq and for military recruiters off campus.

Two other protests took place that same day. At City College, leftist students and a couple of faculty members confronted military recruiters who had shown up on campus. Meanwhile, our exposure of the Borough of Manhattan Community College Homeland Security program course has been taken up by BMCC students and faculty (see box page 59). Also on



December 9, about 50 BMCC students held a vocal and very visible protest (including a march through campus) against this sinister "Fatherland Security" program, including some striking posters made by an IG supporter.

escorted off campus for trying to see a professor involved in the Miguel Malo defense campaign.

Most recently I've been involved in exposing the sinister "Homeland Security" program at BMCC, and in the defense campaign for Miguel Malo, the Hostos student leader who is the target of a truly vicious prosecution at the hands of the CUNY administration and the Bronx DA's office. In any discussion of CUNY, the foremost symbol of campus repression is the prosecution of Miguel Malo. This has been going on for three and a half years, and it has to stop, now!

The Hostos administration has imposed police-state conditions on that campus, located in the South Bronx and attended by working-class, immigrant, black and Hispanic students. When the *New York Times* ran an article on Miguel's first trial a year ago, which ended in a mistrial, professors and students from Hostos told the reporter about conditions in the college, where "peace officers" parade around in bullet-proof vests, campus access is strictly controlled, and members of the community are subjected to weapons searches just to attend an event at the community college. [See "Backers See Free-Speech Issue in Hostos College Student's Trial," *New York Times*, 10 December 2003.]

Students from elsewhere in CUNY were blocked from using the Hostos library. The student newspaper shut down and simply disappeared. A couple of years ago members of our group were told they could not hand out leaflets on the public streets within two blocks of the Hostos campus. The list could go on for much longer than the time allotted here.

The "case" against Miguel Malo is an outrageous frame-up. The goal is to intimidate and silence students and faculty at Hostos and throughout CUNY. This will not succeed.

Miguel was arrested for holding up a protest sign against

cuts in ESL and bilingual programs. The campus police had declared the entire campus off limits to student protest. When Miguel held up a sign, he was thrown to the ground and arrested.

Testimony at Miguel's trial revealed that the prosecution's story is full of falsehoods and flagrant, absurd contradictions. Instead of only two "peace officers" arresting Miguel, as the prosecution claimed, students testified that there were eight or nine. They surrounded Miguel and dragged him to a wall, and surrounded other student leaders, threatening to arrest them as well...

Barron cut the speaker off here, on the bogus claim that such information could harm Miguel's legal case.

In the eyes of the authorities, Miguel Malo's "crime" – in addition to protesting cuts at CUNY – was that he refused to buckle under to this system, and would not plead guilty to the false charges against him in exchange for a reduced sentence. Instead he has courageously insisted on his rights. Those guilty are the campus cops, administration, and the capitalist injustice system. We demand: Drop all the charges now! Cops off campus! Stop the frame-up and the legal vendetta!

As for the BMCC "Homeland Security" course, this training for repression is part of a proposed Security Management Certificate program the administration wants to establish. This includes "Interrogation techniques," "Undercover Investigations in the Workplace," and "technology for surveillance" – as exemplified, presumably, by the surveillance camera the administration at CCNY disguised as a smoke detector in order to spy on student activists.

The Advisory Board for the BMCC program shows what is really going on here....

Barron again cut the speaker off here and would not allow him to finish.

Kick Out Military Recruiters! No Homeland Security at CUNY!



Revolution

Protests on the Home Front

Students at the City University of New York (CUNY) are fighting against the imperialist war "at home." Protest against a "Homeland Security" course at BMCC (above), struggles against military recruiters at Bronx Community College (right) and CCNY, defense of Miguel Malo at Hostos.

Pages 58-63

